

PRICE \$7.99

MAR. 23, 2015

THE NEW YORKER

1.



2.



3.



4.





learn more at microsoftcloud.com



This cloud stands up to any storm.

Microsoft Azure scales to enable AccuWeather to respond to 9.5 billion requests for crucial weather data per day. This cloud rises to the challenge when the weather is at its worst.

This is the Microsoft Cloud.

THE NEW YORKER STYLE

ISSUE

M A R C H 23, 2015

11 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

35 **THE TALK OF THE TOWN**
David Remnick on Hillary then and now; Hulk Hogan; "Mad Men"; money hunting; James Surowiecki on short selling.

REBECCA MEAD 42 **SOLE CYCLE**
How the Birkenstock became stylish.

HEATHER HAVRILESKY 49 **MOTHER OF DRAGONS**

PATRICIA MARX 50 **ABOUT FACE**
Plastic surgery, Gangnam style.

JAMES B. STEWART 56 **A FIGHT AT THE OPERA**
Can the Met afford Peter Gelb's vision?

MAIRA KALMAN 65 **SKETCHBOOK**
Hood by Air.

JESSAMYN HATCHER 68 **TWENTY-ONE DRESSES**
Photographs by Pari Dukovic.

COLM TÓIBÍN 78 **FICTION**
"SLEEP"

LOUIS MENAND 84 **THE CRITICS**
A CRITIC AT LARGE
Karen M. Paget's "Patriotic Betrayal."

JAMES WOOD 91 **BOOKS**
Briefly Noted
 92 *Kazuo Ishiguro's "The Buried Giant."*

EMILY NUSSBAUM 96 **ON TELEVISION**
"The Jinx."

Continued on page 4



PRADA

THOMAS LUX 46
STEPHEN BURT 62

POEMS
"Cow Chases Boys"
"My 1985"

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

COVER
"A Rose"

DRAWINGS Danny Shanahan, Joe Dator, Bruce Eric Kaplan, Frank Cotham, Emily Flake,
Edward Steed, Zachary Kanin, Kaamran Hafeez, Tom Toro, P. C. Vey SPOTS Wilfrid Wood



NEVER **TOO** TIMELESS

THE VINTAGE INSPIRED
ARTIFACTS FAUCET COLLECTION.
FIND THE STYLE AND FINISH THAT
TRULY REFLECT YOU.

THE BOLD LOOK
OF **KOHLER**.

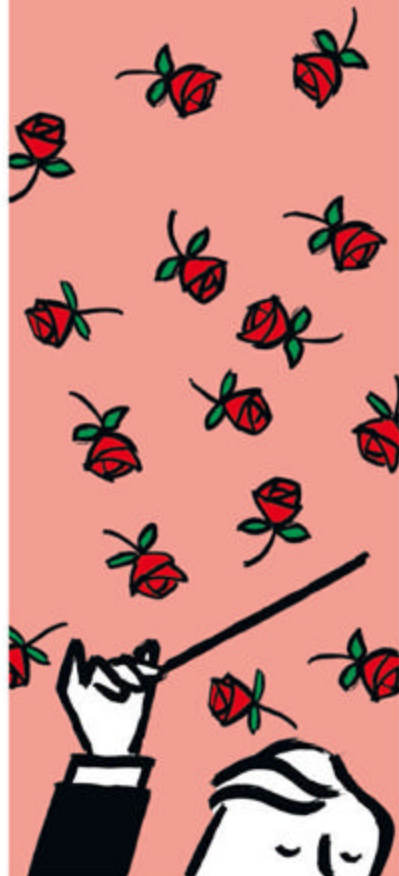


CULTURE DESK

TIMELY NOTES ON ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

"If I have but one rule, it's that critics shouldn't opine on subjects they know nothing about, or use the word 'opine.'"
—"I Really Do Hate Top-Ten Lists,"
Emily Nussbaum

www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk



NEWYORKER.COM
PUBLISHES MORE THAN FIFTEEN
ORIGINAL STORIES A DAY

CONDÉ NAST

CONTRIBUTORS

JAMES B. STEWART ("A FIGHT AT THE OPERA," P. 56), a columnist for the *Times*, has published nine books, including "Den of Thieves." He teaches at Columbia.

REBECCA MEAD ("SOLE CYCLE," P. 42) is a staff writer and the author of "My Life in Middlemarch," which is available in paperback.

PATRICIA MARX ("ABOUT FACE," P. 50) has a new book, "Let's Be Less Stupid: An Attempt to Maintain My Mental Faculties," coming out in July.

STEPHEN BURT (POEM, P. 62) is a professor of English at Harvard. He is the author of several books of poetry and criticism, including "Belmont: Poems."

JESSAMYN HATCHER ("TWENTY-ONE DRESSES," P. 68) teaches at N.Y.U. and is working on a book about Hortense Mitchell Acton and the French haute-couture designers Callot Soeurs.

PARI DUKOVIC (PHOTOGRAPH, P. 42; PORTFOLIO, P. 68) is a *New Yorker* staff photographer. His work is included in "Emerging," an exhibit opening in June at the Annenberg Space for Photography, in Los Angeles.

COLM TÓIBÍN (FICTION, P. 78) has published eight novels, including "Nora Webster." His next book, "On Elizabeth Bishop," comes out later this month.

LOUIS MENAND (A CRITIC AT LARGE, P. 84) teaches at Harvard and has contributed to the magazine since 1991.

JAMES WOOD (BOOKS, P. 92) is the author of "The Nearest Thing to Life," which comes out next month.

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN (COVER) will publish his fifth children's book, "The Potato King," in April. A solo exhibit of his work opens at the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna in June.

NEWYORKER.COM

EVERYTHING IN THE MAGAZINE, AND MORE THAN FIFTEEN ORIGINAL STORIES A DAY.

ALSO:

DAILY COMMENT / CULTURAL COMMENT: Opinions and reflections by Jeffrey Toobin, Joshua Rothman, and others.

ARCHIVE: Classic *New Yorker* stories about style, by Lauren Collins, Ariel Levy, and others.

THE FRONT ROW: Notes on movies, by Richard Brody.

PAGE-TURNER: News and commentary on books and the writing life.

PODCASTS: On the Political Scene, Jill Lepore and George Packer join Dorothy Wickenden for a discussion about the rhetoric of inequality. Plus, Evan Osnos, Peter Hessler, and Amelia Lester on Out Loud.

VIDEO: A new episode of "The Cartoon Lounge," with Robert Mankoff.

FICTION AND POETRY: Readings by Colm Tóibín, Stephen Burt, and Thomas Lux.

SUBSCRIBERS: Get access to our magazine app for tablets and smartphones at the App Store, Amazon.com, or Google Play. (Access varies by location and device.)



BOTTEGA VENETA

EXPLORE BOTTEGAVENETA.COM

THE MAIL

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Elizabeth Kolbert's article on Nazi trials and the *Stolpersteine* project dovetailed with a report released the same week by the Equal Justice Initiative, which disclosed that some four thousand lynchings occurred in the American South between 1877 and 1950 ("The Last Trial," February 16th). The organization's executive director, Bryan Stevenson, is seeking to memorialize those lynchings. In a 2012 TED Talk, he remarked that Germany has no death penalty, and he wondered what it would feel like if Germany were executing people and they were disproportionately Jewish. "It would be unconscionable," he concluded. Yet in the Southern states, he continued, "where there are buried in the ground the bodies of people who were lynched," the death penalty persists, and is often applied with racial bias. The *Stolpersteine* project might be a model for the memorialization that Stevenson is seeking, and awaken people to the awful history, and tenacity, of racism in the United States.

Lawrence Bush
Editor, *Jewish Currents*
Accord, N.Y.

Kolbert's article demonstrates the distinction between restorative and retributive justice. Germany's civic alternatives to the legal system—like the *Stolpersteine*, along with other forms of memorialization and reparation—may be more effective in taking moral responsibility for the Holocaust. This is restorative justice: facing the enormity of the violence and evil while expressing genuine grief and remorse. In addition to the *Stolpersteine*, whole towns have invited back the descendants of the murdered and expelled, and meetings have been held between the children of perpetrators and the children of victims. These gestures play an important role in ending denial and encouraging the active protest of ordinary people against state violence and organized terror.

Jessica Benjamin
New York City

While reading Kolbert's piece, some readers will remember Hannah Arendt's articles for *The New Yorker* on Adolf Eichmann's trial, in Jerusalem, which were published in the winter of 1963. Others will recall Arendt's "report on the banality of evil." Arendt noted that the Israeli prosecutors were trying to use the case as a didactic tool, to create "a show trial." She wrote, "The purpose of a trial is to render justice, and nothing else; even the noblest ulterior purposes." This was not a popular opinion, but it was a worthy warning for the future. One reason that an Israeli court wrongly convicted John Demjanjuk of having been Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka was that authorities in the United States and Israel ignored exculpatory evidence and refused to share relevant information with the defense. They did this because they had set a goal of trying to use the courtroom as a classroom. It nearly led to the execution of a guilty man, but for the wrong crime. As Germany moves forward with the last round of trials, judges should heed Arendt's words.

Mark A. Wolfgram
Stillwater, Okla.

ROUTINE VACCINE

I read Margaret Talbot's Comment on vaccines with interest ("Not Immune," February 16th). It is important to note that all infants who are immunized routinely begin receiving pertussis vaccine at two months of age (as well as at four and six months) as part of the Centers for Disease Control's routine recommendations regarding immunization. As Talbot writes, it takes time for immunity to develop in growing infants, which presents a problem when it comes to protecting one of the most vulnerable populations. The measles vaccine can also be given as early as nine months, at the recommendation of the World Health Organization, and as is frequently done in areas outside the U.S. where the disease may be endemic.

Gregory Plemmons, M.D.
Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital
Nashville, Tenn.

Talbot observes that anti-vaccine parents are influenced by beliefs that are not supported by science. Ironically, responses to this problem are often not supported by science, either. A former public health official is quoted as telling Talbot that "doubling down on education" about infectious diseases will help. Many others share the belief that those who know the facts will be more inclined to get vaccinated. But science doesn't necessarily support this conclusion. A study published in *Pediatrics* last October by my team tested this proposition and found that parents with more knowledge about vaccination and infectious disease were not more likely to have their children vaccinated. Other studies also caution against placing too much hope in the role of facts.

J. M. Fishman
University of Pennsylvania School
of Medicine
Philadelphia, Pa.

There are still a few of us around who remember life before vaccines. It's hard watching each generation reinvent the wheel, when we wish that they could learn from our memories: of the two children in my mother's family who died of diphtheria, of the big red signs on houses under scarlet-fever quarantine, and of the little girl up the street who died of the disease. The one vaccine available to us was smallpox; nobody questioned whether to get it. We lined up at school to receive the little scratch on the arm, and delighted in comparing scabs afterward—they meant that the vaccine "took." As a naval-aviation cadet during the Second World War, my husband fell behind his class when he came down with the mumps. We all knew somebody who limped for life—or worse—as a result of polio. Measles, mumps, chicken pox, whooping cough—I had them all. I'd have gladly risked the "hazards" of the vaccines.

Vivian Douglas Smith
Falls Church, Va.

•
Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. We regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter or return letters.





GUCCI

GUCCI.COM

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



MARCH WEDNESDAY • THURSDAY • FRIDAY • SATURDAY • SUNDAY • MONDAY • TUESDAY
2015 18TH 19TH 20TH 21ST 22ND 23RD 24TH

LOCAL FANS OF Hilary Mantel's irresistible historical novels "Wolf Hall" and "Bring Up the Bodies," about Henry VIII's brilliant, if undersung, right-hand man, Thomas Cromwell, have been able to indulge their Tudor fix at the Frick Collection, where Hans Holbein the Younger's brooding portraits of Cromwell and his nemesis Thomas More face off on either side of a fireplace. This spring, there's more: the Royal Shakespeare Company's two-part, six-hour stage version of the books comes to Broadway's Winter Garden. Lydia Leonard (above, center) plays the ill-fated temptress turned queen Anne Boleyn; Nathaniel Parker (above, left) plays the quixotic King Henry VIII; and Ben Miles (above, right) plays the ultimate shape-shifter Cromwell, whom Mantel dug out of obscurity for his long-awaited moment in the spotlight.

ART | DANCE
THE THEATRE
CLASSICAL MUSIC
MOVIES | NIGHT LIFE
ABOVE & BEYOND
FOOD & DRINK

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES DAY

ART

MUSEUMS SHORT LIST MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"Björk." Through June 7.

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

"On Kawara—Silence." Through May 3.

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

"Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic." Through May 24.

FRICK COLLECTION

"Coypel's Don Quixote Tapestries." Through May 17.

JEWISH MUSEUM

"Repetition and Difference." Through Aug. 9.

NEW MUSEUM

"Surround Audience: 2015 Triennial." Through May 15.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum

"The Plains Indians: Artists of Earth and Sky"

The zenith of the cultures that are celebrated in this wondrous show of some hundred and fifty artifacts lasted barely two hundred years. It started in 1680, when Pueblo Indians seized the steeds of Spanish settlers whom they had driven out of what is now New Mexico, and ended with the killing of more than two hundred Lakota men, women, and children by federal troops at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1890. Just about everything in the exactly selected and elegantly installed show—war clubs, shields, garments, headdresses, many pipes, bags, a saddle, a bear-claw necklace, dolls, cradleboards—impresses as a peak artistic achievement. For example, "Robe with Mythic Bird" (1700-40), from an unknown tribe of the Eastern Plains: a tanned buffalo hide pigmented with a spiky abstraction, probably of a thunderbird, in red and black, which rivals the most exciting modern art. Through May 10.

Museum of Biblical Art "Sculpture in the Age of Donatello"

In 1425, after years of carving lifelike but stern figures for the façade of Florence's Duomo, Donatello crafted an almost unbearably forceful statue

of a prophet (perhaps Habakkuk), whose bald head, scored mustache, and flayed cheeks give him the mien of a burn victim. The sculpture was meant to be seen from seventy feet below; viewed in the gallery, Donatello's foreshortening resolves into an ominous emaciation, as if one of Giacometti's tortured figures had been teleported five hundred years back in time. The other works here—including four wooden models for Brunelleschi's dome and three copies of panels from Ghiberti's baptistry doors—offer a pleasant reminder of the Duomo's significance to the early Renaissance. Although the show's arguments may not have much more heft than your average European package tour, the chance to see such glories outside Italy is rare. Through June 14.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Eliot Elisofon

The American photojournalist, who died in 1973, is best known for his work for *Life* in the nineteen-forties and fifties. Some of those pictures crop up in this shrewd survey, notably a group of portraits taken in 1942 in a French-Moroccan concentration camp. But the show's over-all focus is broader, including New York street-scenes from the thirties, as evocative as anything by Berenice Abbott, and

charming images of children at play that would pair nicely with those by Helen Levitt. Still-lives shot in the sculptor David Smith's factory-like studio dig into the down-and-dirty side of the creative process. Through April 18. (Gitterman, 41 E. 57th St. 212-734-0868.)

"Aldus Manutius: A Legacy More Lasting Than Bronze"

At the end of the fifteenth century, fifty years after Gutenberg invented movable type, Greek literature was still being kept alive in handwritten manuscript. As this fascinating exhibition reveals, we owe the preservation of the classics in large part to Aldo Manuzio—his Latinized name was Aldus Manutius—who emigrated from the Papal States to Venice to set up shop as a printmaker. Along with the complete works of Aristotle (one of whose volumes features an exquisite drop-cap delta entangled in vines), Aldus published Virgil, in slanting letters of his own design. He called the format Aldine; we call it italic. One of the leading humanists in the booming Serene Republic, Aldus had connections both to the Venetian Senate and to the Pope; a volume of Cicero's letters on view here threatens plagiarists with excommunication. Even that risk was not enough to stop dozens of wannabe Alduses,



When she was eleven, in 1992, the Arab-Kurdish artist Hayv Kahraman fled with her family from Baghdad to Stockholm in the wake of the first Gulf War. She went on to study graphic design in Florence and now lives in the Bay Area. Kahraman's tautly lyrical paintings on linen (including the ten-foot-wide "Samoot la Moot," which was completed this year) reflect this enlacing of cultural influences. At the Jack Shainman gallery through April 4.



Ring Command bezel

Sky-Dweller /sky•dwell•er/:

1. The distinctive timepiece for global executives. 2. Its red triangle always points to the time at home, while its conventional hands can be set to a second time zone. 3. A patented annual calendar intelligently distinguishes between 30- and 31-day months with unparalleled reliability. 4. The rotatable Ring Command bezel ensures easy setting of its functions. 5. Rolex innovation at its best. 6. Created with 14 ingenious patents. 7. The Rolex Way.



ROLEX

More Rolex watchmaking at ROLEX.COM

FOR AN OFFICIAL ROLEX JEWELER CALL 1-800-367-6539. ROLEX ® OYSTER PERPETUAL AND SKY-DWELLER ARE ® TRADEMARKS. NEW YORK

including a French pirate whose pseudo-Aldine war treatise illustrates troop formations as undulating lines of lowercase "D's." Through April 25. (Grolier Club, 47 E. 60th St. 212-838-6690.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Julia Dault

The Toronto-born, Brooklyn-based artist has won acclaim for her laborious but elegant sculptures made from sheets of Formica and Plexiglas, which she fashions on site without nails or glue. There's one here, but it's Dault's paintings that steal the show, treading the line between programmatic and expressionistic. Patterned black-and-white abstractions repeat motifs of squiggles or angles, with occasional slippages and imperfections; others make use of sgraffito, with bright color seeping through scratched-away top coats of black. The unapologetic beauty of Dault's work trivializes the pretensions of the so-called zombie formalists, giving painting for painting's sake a good name. Through March 21. (Boesky, 509 W. 24th St. 212-680-9889.)

Santu Mofokeng

This survey of the influential South African photographer—works from six series made over three decades—is uneven, but his observations of daily life under apartheid remain trenchant for their quiet reserve. After apartheid was lifted, Mofokeng continued to mark its heavy toll in a group of barren landscapes, each the site of a mass grave or a massacre. The slide show "The Black Photo Album" pairs late-nineteenth-century studio portraits of black subjects with pointed captions written by Mofokeng—the first one reads, "Who is gazing?" Through May 23. (Walther Collection, 526 W. 26th St. 212-352-0683.)

"The Radiants"

The Japanese artist Ei Arakawa and his brother Tomoo, who were born in Fukushima, have teamed up with the sharp curator Jacob King to organize this historically resonant, weirdly droll show centered on nuclear radiation. There are splattered paintings from the fifties by Enrico Baj and cameraless photographs, made with uranium, by Sigmar Polke, but much of the

art here takes a more literal view of nuclear disaster. Sergei Tcherepnin displays photographs of a road trip he took near the power plant in Fukushima, accompanied by audio of a furiously clicking Geiger counter, which he recorded while driving. Among several film and video works, don't miss Michael Smith's deadpan masterpiece from 1983, in which his alter ego Mike (a kind of basic-cable *Candide*) builds a snack bar inside a bomb shelter. Through March 28. (Bortolami, 520 W. 20th St. 212-727-2050.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Lamia Joreige

The Lebanese artist, a standout in last summer's New Museum showcase of contemporary Arab art, conjures the burdens of history through archival presentations, essayistic films, and photographs, all freighted with backstories. In her U.S. solo debut, Joreige considers the legacy of the National Museum of Beirut, most hair-raisingly in a concrete sculpture that reproduces, in negative, a hole in an ancient mosaic that

a sniper shot out during the civil war. But, when Joreige turns poetic, her work can feel meretricious, as in the large photograms that pay self-reflexive homage to Yves Klein's "Anthropométries." Through April 9. (Grahne, 157 Hudson St., at Laight St. 212-240-9442.)

"Prague Functionalism"

From Kafka's day until the coup d'état of 1948, Prague was a hub for architects working in what we now call the International Style: planar surfaces, horizontal fenestration, nautical staircases and terraces, and no trimmings, seen here in models and posters (whose dense texts have been translated, with mixed results, from the Czech). Adolf Loos's Villa Müller, completed in 1931, typifies his philosophy of ornament as crime: the unadorned white cube, rising from a slope, offers little hint of its multilevel spaces, connected by internal staircases. The show's coda considers contemporary projects, notably a rowing-club headquarters made of low-slung concrete and steel. Through May 23. (Center for Architecture, 536 LaGuardia Pl. 212-683-0023.)

DANCE

Paul Taylor's American Modern Dance

Taylor's new model for his company, in which he diversifies by including pieces by other choreographers, is a hedge against a future when Taylor will, inevitably, no longer be creating new dances every year. Another big change—for the better—is the use of live music. The excellent Orchestra of St. Luke's will complement such works as Taylor's "Sunset," set to Elgar's heart-stopping Serenade and Elegy for Strings. Also being performed this week are "Aureole" (set to Handel), "Esplanade" (Bach), and the new "Sea Lark" (Poulenc). Doris Humphrey's "Passacaglia and Fugue," from 1938, will be performed by the Limón Dance Company, and Shen Wei's lucid rendition of Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" will be danced by his own troupe, Shen Wei Dance Arts. (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. March 17-22 and March 24. Through March 29.)

Ailey II

The highly polished dancers of Alvin Ailey's junior ensemble get their first independent Joyce season.

Program 1 includes "Hissy Fits," by the often flashy Dwight Rhoden, of Complexions, as well as a piece by the up-and-coming Amy Hall Garner, whose credits range from Juilliard to Broadway. Program 2 is anchored by a dance suite set to Philip Glass and Schumann, by the troupe's director, Troy Powell. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. March 17-22.)

Ballet in Cinema / Royal Ballet's "Swan Lake"

Though the young Russian ballet phenomenon Natalia Osipova has danced "Giselle" and "Sleeping Beauty" in the U.S., American audiences have yet to see her in "Swan Lake." Osipova's first turn as the Swan Queen was in 2013, when she was a guest at the Royal Ballet; now a full member of the company, she returns to the role, partnered by the Canadian danseur Matthew Golding (known as the Brad Pitt of ballet). The live performance of Anthony Dowell's opulent 1987 production will be taped in London on March 17, two days before it screens in cinemas in the U.S., on March 19,

at Regal Union Square Stadium and other theatres. (For all locations, see fathomevents.com.)

Rebecca Serrell Cyr

Cyr, an intense, riveting performer in dances by Donna Uchizono and RoseAnne Spradlin, presents her first full-length piece of choreography, "Assemblage." As the title indicates, it's a miscellany: some wrestling, some masks and other random props, borrowings from this and that dance vocabulary, and echoes of Uchizono and Spradlin. (JACK, 505½ Waverly Ave., Brooklyn. jackny.org. March 19-21.)

"Platform 2015: Dancers, Buildings, and People in the Streets"

This week, Emily Coates, a veteran of New York City Ballet and Twyla Tharp, who is now on the theatre faculty at Yale, collaborates with Yve Laris Cohen, a young choreographer who focuses on gender and power relationships. In another pairing, Troy Schumacher, whose choreography has been performed by City Ballet, where he also dances, teams up with Jillian Peña, known for her deadpan sendups of ballet technique. (Dance Project, St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. March 19-21.)

"Generations of Gypsy Flamenco"

In this traditional gala-style program of flamenco, Concha Vargas is the elder, ample-bodied and flirtatious. Representing the middle is Pepe

Torres, a fellow with a receding hairline and exceptional musicality. The young one is Gema Moneo, full of promise and spirit. They are joined by guitarists, percussionists, and singers, including the soulful vocalist Esperanza Fernandez, who can dance, too. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. March 20.)

Yossi Berg and Oded Graf

The evening-length male duet depicting a hothouse relationship through a weave of body-tangling physicality and eccentric gestures is a staple of contemporary Israeli dance. In "Heroes," from 2005, the first work made by this Israeli team, Berg and Graf are two distinct characters who get to know each other nonverbally. At first, they fail to achieve intimacy, and then they succeed, as David Bowie's eponymous track plays. (New York Live Arts, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. March 20-21.)

Sally Silvers

The typically unadventurous Harkness Dance Festival closes on a welcome note of idiosyncrasy with "Actual Size," Silvers's mischievous, protean, witty 2014 dance take on Hitchcock films. For the festival's show-and-tell section, she identifies some of the filmmaker's motifs in her work and does a bit of "live choreography," to be incorporated into the subsequent performance. Surprise guests in Hitchcockian cameos join a terrific cast that includes Dylan Crossman and Melissa Toogood. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. March 20-22.)



A GOODMAN CULTIVATES EXCELLENCE

Goodman's
MEN'S STORE
BERGDORF GOODMAN

CHRISTOPHER MAGEE / HUMAN RESOURCES EXECUTIVE / **IN ISAIA**
BG.COM/GOODMANS @GOODMANS 5TH AVENUE AT 58TH STREET 212 339 3342



NATIVE SON

Daniel Beaty pays tribute to the actor and activist Paul Robeson.

WHEN I WAS A KID, Paul Robeson was one of those figures whom I felt it was my duty to admire, but the truth is I was unmoved by his talent, because I was stopped dead by his rendition of “Ol’ Man River” in the 1936 film version of “Show Boat”—the song felt “old” and not a little stereotypical to me, and prevented me from appreciating the man who was singing it. Around that time, I also read “The Emperor Jones,” Eugene O’Neill’s 1920 play about a black man who becomes the ruler of an imaginary island. Robeson had starred in the 1924 revival and in the 1933 film version, for which the director, Dudley Murphy, didn’t feel moved to drop any of those “dem”s and “de”s which kept me from really listening to the language.

But, when I was older, I met a guy who’d known the New Jersey-born Robeson, and had seen him in many shows. (Robeson died in 1976.) He filled me in on Robeson’s interesting offstage life, including the complicated affair he’d had with the white actress Uta Hagen, when they were both starring in “Othello,” in 1943. Further digging revealed that watching Robeson at a white “liberal” party had inspired Dorothy Parker’s forced but still interesting short story “Arrangement in Black and White,” which appeared in this magazine in 1927. It wasn’t until I was nearly grown that I caught up to Robeson’s politics and understood the pain and the aggravation that he had to endure in order to have any sort of career at all.

The Venezuelan-born playwright and director Moisés Kaufman, whose great subject is the outsider—his work has centered on figures as diverse as Oscar Wilde and a musicologist suffering from A.L.S., played by Jane Fonda—directs Daniel Beaty in “The Tallest Tree in the Forest” (at BAM’s Harvey Theatre March 22–29), which Beaty wrote, about Robeson’s rise from son of a former slave to enemy of HUAC and perennial political star. The thirty-nine-year-old Beaty plays forty characters in the solo piece, which also incorporates songs, including “Ol’ Man River” and “Happy Days Are Here Again.” In the same way that Robeson used his famous bass to bring emotional depth and color to roles that would otherwise be cardboard representations, Beaty and Kaufman have combined their strengths to expand on various Robeson myths, the better to see and experience his hard-earned stardom, and his manly, bloody truths.

—Hilton Als



THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

An American in Paris

Craig Lucas wrote the book for this musical adaptation of the 1951 movie, with music and lyrics by George and Ira Gershwin, directed and choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon. Starring Robert Fairchild, Leanne Cope, Veanne Cox, Jill Paice, Brandon Uranowitz, and Max von Essen. In previews. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 877-250-2929.)

Buzzer

A play by Tracey Scott Wilson, directed by Anne Kauffman, about a young black man who, after attending Exeter and Harvard, returns to a rough Brooklyn neighborhood with his white girlfriend as the area becomes gentrified. Previews begin March 24. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

Finding Neverland

Diane Paulus directs a new musical based on the movie, from 2004, about the life of J. M. Barrie, with a book by James Graham and music and lyrics by Gary Barlow and Eliot Kennedy. Starring Matthew Morrison (“Glee”) and Kelsey Grammer. In previews. (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 877-250-2929.)

Gigi

Eric Schaeffer directs the musical by Alan Jay Lerner (book and lyrics) and Frederick Loewe (music), adapted by Heidi Thomas, about a young Parisian woman who falls in love with a wealthy playboy. Vanessa Hudgens, Corey Cott, and Victoria Clark star. Previews begin March 19. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 877-250-2929.)

Hand to God

Steven Boyer stars in this play by Robert Askins, transferring to Broadway after a successful Off Broadway run, in which a shy Christian boy at a puppet ministry is shocked to discover that his puppet, Tyrone, has a volatile personality. In previews. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)



INTRODUCING

Lincoln Black Label Living

EXPRESSIONS OF A NEW KIND OF LUXURY

Barrett Prendergast has her best friends to thank for launching her career. She took the old adage "do what you love" to heart when they asked for recipes or convinced her to cater their parties. First, she started a blog, and then a boutique catering business: Valleybrink Road. Here, she indulges in some of the finer things in life—in a hOmE studios-designed house in the Hollywood Hills for Lincoln Black Label.

To celebrate the launch of Lincoln Black Label, we asked Prendergast for her take on our Indulgence vehicle theme.

Pictured here: The Indulgence Lincoln Black Label MKZ



“Luxury to me equals what is aesthetically beautiful, something that appeals to all the senses.

Indulgence means something rich and delicious, like coffee ice cream or dark chocolate. Chocolate just makes you feel a certain way—it ignites something in your soul that makes you feel good.”



Taste Maker

"Making something beautiful that touches all the senses is a wonderful thing," says Prendergast—and that's exactly what Lincoln Black Label designers strove for when choosing the supple leather and Ziricote wood for the Indulgence theme. Cali-born and raised, Prendergast started cooking while studying fashion in college. "I really started to fall in love with it, but I always thought of it as a hobby and never something I could actually do as a career." But when her fondness for the fashion business ended, another business was born.





MODERN HERITAGE

A designer's dream, this high-contrast black-and-white interior is highlighted by Crimson stitching and Argento® wood trim.



INDULGENCE

Uncommonly soft, beautiful leather adds richness and depth to the interior, while Ziricote wood—usually reserved for high-end yachts and fine musical instruments—adds warmth without the need for dyes or stains.



OASIS

Specialty Venetian leather, premium Alcantara® and rich wood would look great in any home—and any luxury vehicle.



CENTER STAGE

This Jet-Black leather interior, complete with Foxfire Red Alcantara® accents, is for those with a flair for the dramatic.



MEMBER PRIVILEGES

Annual detailing, remote vehicle drop-off and pick-up, a designated experience liaison and a premium maintenance plan are just a few of the benefits offered with Lincoln Black Label membership.*



With a curated collection of designer vehicle themes—meticulously brought to life in rare, high-end materials—and a host of exclusive privileges, this is more than luxury ownership. It's membership. To learn more, visit lincoln.com/blacklabel

*See your Black Label Dealer for complete details.

I'm Looking for Helen Twelvemore

David Greenspan wrote this play, set in 1951, about a man searching for the nineteen-twenties movie star. Leigh Silverman directs; Brooke Bloom, Keith Nobbs, and Greenspan star. Previews begin March 19. Opens March 22. (Abrons Arts Center, 466 Grand St. 212-352-3101.)

Iowa

Ken Rus Schmoll directs the world premiere of a new musical play by Jenny Schwartz, with music by Todd Almond and lyrics by Schwartz and Almond, in which a girl must move to the Midwest after her mother falls in love with someone on Facebook. Previews begin March 20. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

It Shoulda Been You

Tyne Daly, Harriet Harris, Lisa Howard, and Sierra Boggess star in this new musical comedy, directed by David Hyde Pierce, in which two very different families clash at the wedding of their children. With a book and lyrics by Brian Hargrove and music by Barbara Anselmi. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 877-250-2929.)

The King and I

Kelli O'Hara and Ken Watanabe star in Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical, based on the novel "Anna and the King of Siam," by Margaret Landon. A British schoolteacher in eighteen-sixties Bangkok contends with the King of Siam, whose children she tutors. Bartlett Sher directs the Lincoln Center Theatre production. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

Paint Your Wagon

"Encores!" presents this 1951 musical, with a book and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner and music by Frederick Loewe, about a miner in gold-rush-era California and his daughter, who falls in love. Keith Carradine stars. March 18-22. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

Something Rotten

Casey Nicholaw directs this musical comedy, with music and lyrics by Wayne and Karey Kirkpatrick and a book by Karey Kirkpatrick and John O'Farrell. The story involves a writing team in the fifteen-nineties who, in order to compete with Shakespeare, attempt to write the world's first musical. Previews begin March 23. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

The Tallest Tree in the Forest

Tectonic Theatre Project presents this play, written and performed by Daniel Beaty and directed by Moisés Kaufman, about Paul Robeson, the son of a former slave who became a lawyer, an actor, and a civil-rights

icon. Opens March 22. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

The Undeniable Sound of Right Now

Rattlestick and Women's Project present a new play by Laura Eason, directed by Kirsten Kelly, about a rock-club owner trying to adjust to the early nineties. Previews begin March 19. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 866-811-4111.)

Wolf Hall: Parts One & Two

The Royal Shakespeare Company's productions of Hilary Mantel's books "Wolf Hall" and "Bring Up the Bodies" come to Broadway. Previews begin March 20. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

Abundance

In the eighteen-sixties, in the wild Wyoming Territory, two hopeful young mail-order brides, Macon (Kelly McAndrew) and Bess (Tracy Middendorf), begin a lifelong friendship while awaiting the arrival of their soon-to-be husbands—one a woebegone, one-eyed widower (Ted Koch), the other a shiftless, abusive creep (Todd Lawson). Over the years, Macon, who's loud and confident, takes care of Bess, who's not, until Bess is kidnapped by Indians, leaving Macon bereft and alone with the two useless men and a failing business. Under the direction of Jenn Thompson, this TACT production of Beth Henley's beautiful 1990 play, which spans twenty-five years, deftly paints a picture of America's pioneering sensibility: enterprising, fickle, romantic, brutal, and enduring. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

The Audience

Helen Mirren stars as Queen Elizabeth II in Peter Morgan's play, directed by Stephen Daldry. In the course of the play, Elizabeth meets with eight of the Prime Ministers whose terms have coincided with her reign. There's enough air in Morgan's material for Mirren to interpret, and for Daldry to guide her interpretation and add an element that only the stage can contain: camp. Daldry and Mirren don't ridicule Elizabeth II; they ridicule her job and its endless mundanities, while focussing on the moments when she sneaks out from behind the discipline. Mirren is not a coquettish queen, but she is a sexy one, because she is so controlled and such a good comedienne behind her cardigan, her sensible shoes, and her pearls. The Queen understands that her Prime Ministers are aspirants. Morgan's play is as much a treatise on class resentment as anything else, and Daldry knows that each of these characters is both more and less than human, representative of an aspect of life, rather than life

itself. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/16/15.) (Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

Bright Half Life

In Tanya Barfield's engaging new play, presented by Women's Project, two attractive and articulate women (Rachael Holmes and Rebecca Henderson) meet at work in their twenties, date secretly, fall in love, have children, get married (when it becomes legal), fight a lot, split, and, separately, watch their kids grow up. This well-written portrayal of smart women finding, losing, and finding themselves and each other again is profound, and it's made more so by the fact that Barfield, rather than telling the story linearly, mixes up the chronology like someone taking the pieces of a puzzle and throwing them on a table: one moment the women are breaking up in middle age; the next, one is telling the other for the first time how beautiful she is. As a result, past, present, and future are contained in each moment, and every one of them feels full. Under the direction of Leigh Silverman, Holmes and Henderson are wonderful. (City Center Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Through March 22.)

Churchill

It's hard to imagine that the powerful statesman Winston Churchill was, at the age of sixty-two, an avuncular old man, doddering around with a paintbrush or a cigar, chuckling about the old days (six years earlier) when he became Prime Minister of England during the Second World War. But that, unfortunately, is how Ronald Keaton plays him in his two-act one-man show. It's not that a biography of Churchill wouldn't be fascinating—judging by the material that Keaton has amassed, it could be. But Keaton's performance, in which he lectures an American audience on the facts of his life, is consistently stodgy, and too cute for its own good. Directed by Kurt Johns. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

Fish in the Dark

Larry David makes his Broadway debut in this comedy, which he wrote. We meet Norman (David) in a Los Angeles hospital, where his father, Sidney (Jerry Adler), is dying; family members, including Norman, his brother Arthur (Ben Shenkman), and their mother, Gloria (Jayne Houdyshell), are taking turns at Sidney's bedside. Soon, the secrets and revelations come crowding in, including the fact that the family maid, Fabiana (Rosie Perez), has borne Sidney's child, Diego (Jake Cannavale). Norman is a greedy, self-interested schlemiel, not unlike the one David played on "Curb Your Enthusiasm"—a stereotype of loathing, who views everything through the

ALSO NOTABLE

ALADDIN

New Amsterdam

BEAUTIFUL—THE CAROLE KING MUSICAL

Stephen Sondheim

BETWEEN RIVERSIDE AND CRAZY

Second Stage.
Through March 22.

THE BOOK OF MORMON

Eugene O'Neill

BROOKLYNITE

Vineyard

CABARET

Studio 54

THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME

Ethel Barrymore

FASHIONS FOR MEN

Mint

A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE TO LOVE AND MURDER

Walter Kerr

HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH

Belasco

THE HEIDI CHRONICLES

Music Box

HONEYMOON IN VEGAS

Nederlander

IF/THEN

Richard Rodgers.
Through March 22.

INTO THE WOODS

Laura Pels

IT'S ONLY A PLAY

Jacobs

JERSEY BOYS

August Wilson

JOHN & JEN

Clurman

JOSEPHINE AND I

Public

KINKY BOOTS

Hirschfeld

THE LION

Lynn Redgrave Theatre

LITTLE CHILDREN DREAM OF GOD

Roundabout Underground

MATILDA THE MUSICAL

Shubert

LES MISÉRABLES

Imperial

ON THE TOWN

Lyric

ON THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

American Airlines Theatre

PLACEBO

Playwrights Horizons

POSTERITY

Atlantic Theatre Company

RASHEEDA SPEAKING

Pershing Square Signature Center. Through March 22.

ROCKET TO THE MOON

Theatre at St. Clement's

WICKED

Gershwin

THE WORLD OF EXTREME HAPPINESS

City Center Stage I

lens of his own vindictive cowardice. The director, Anna D. Shapiro, moves bodies around the stage with little visible evidence that she's concerned about their inner lives, and rarely steps outside the Broadway machinery to reëvision the dreck she's stuck with. (3/16/15) (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

Hamilton

Lin-Manuel Miranda's complicated, valuable musical, directed by Thomas Kail, does everything it can to stand outside the American-musical canon—and then doesn't. The Founding Fathers Aaron Burr (Leslie Odom, Jr.) and Thomas Jefferson (Daveed Diggs), along with George Washington's aide-de-camp John Laurens (Anthony Ramos) and Alexander Hamilton (Miranda), in eighteenth-century-style knee britches and waistcoats, rap and sing about Hamilton's beginnings. Then it's 1776, and America is struggling for independence from King George III. Once Hamilton works his way into Washington's inner circle, becomes the Treasury Secretary, and meets his future wife, the rich and socially prominent Eliza Schuyler (played by the genteel and dull Phillippa Soo), the show's radicalism is slowly drained, and the resulting corpse is a conventional musical. By burying his trickster-quick take on race, immigrant ambition, colonialism, and masculinity under a commonplace love story in the second half of the show, Miranda hides what he most needs to display: his talent. (3/9/15) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

A Happy End

In Berlin in November, 1932, a prosperous Jewish couple, Mark Erdmann (Curzon Dobell), a prominent university physicist, and his wife, Leah (Carmit Levité), a devotee of high culture, are urged to leave the country by Mark's assistant and Leah's lover, the politically astute Dieter Kraft (Joel Ripka). But Germanness is a huge part of the Erdmanns' identity, which brings about their denial, rationalization, and inertia. Still, as the months go on, and in the wake of Kristallnacht, they come to think that perhaps they will flee, after all. The Israeli physician and playwright Iddo Netanyahu puts a domestic spin on cataclysmic events, trying to explore why so many stayed, but much of the dialogue is an uncomfortable mixture of the didactic and the melodramatic. Directed by Alex Dmitriev. (Abingdon, 312 W. 36th St. 866-811-4111.)

The Liquid Plain

Elegant if often inert, Naomi Wallace's play, about two runaway slaves, mingles fantasy and epic, tragedy and history. Set in 1791 and 1837, the drama crashes together sailors and slavers, perpetrators and victims of the triangle trade. Somehow, the poet William Blake is there, too, dangling from a gibbet above a Rhode Island dock twenty years after his death. Wallace is as much a poet as she is a playwright, and her carefully wrought language, directed by Kwame Kwei-Armah, can weigh the action down. But the second act gets a lift, courtesy of a strong performance by

OF NOTE MYSTERY OF LOVE & SEX

Romantic relationships are difficult enough between people with similar backgrounds—witness the long marriage of Howard (Tony Shalhoub), a mystery novelist, and Lucinda (Diane Lane), his pot-smoking, wisecracking wife. Two decades into their marriage, their twentysomething daughter, Charlotte (Gayle Rankin), is the only thing keeping them together. But when the romantic relationship between Charlotte and her childhood best friend, Jonny (Mamoudou Athie), becomes complicated by the huge divides of religion (she's Jewish, he's Baptist), race (she's white, he's black), and sexual confusion (he's a twenty-year-old "virgin" and she's "bisexual"), there's going to be a lot of drama. *Bathsheba Doran's* moving new play explores, with a lot of good humor, the fine line between love and hate, and the lines that separate family members, neighbors, and enemies. Under the direction of Sam Gold, all four performances are deeply realized and entertaining. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

LisaGay Hamilton. As in her earlier plays, Wallace explores the limits of class, race, and gender, as well as their possible subversions. "Being is not about what you're born, not about what you seem or speak. Who you are is what you carry." How's that for a song of experience? (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

Lives of the Saints

David Ives writes about ethics, morals, metaphysics, and ontology—which is slightly strange, because Ives writes comedies. Short ones. Two years ago, Primary Stages revived Ives's effervescent evening "All in the Timing," and now the company offers a new collection of six one-

acts, again directed by John Rando, again expertly performed. These are more mature plays, which is both good and bad. The strand of melancholy in the earlier work has widened; faith in the punch line has narrowed. But, if there's little here to equal the breathless mirth of "The Universal Language" or "The Philadelphia," "All in the Timing" didn't offer anything quite as gentle as the parallel-lives experiment "It's All Good" or as sweet as the elderly Polish Catholics of the title play. Happily, Ives hasn't grown up entirely. The deathbed-set "Life Signs" presents a superlative brandy-flavored spit-take. And then another. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera

Ah, "*Manon*": so flighty, so capricious, so utterly irresistible. The predominantly black-and-white décor and costumes, at once charming and grim, which helped make Laurent Pelly's Belle Époque production of Massenet's luxurious tragedy so effective at its première, in 2012, endure in this revival, conducted with scrupulous elegance by Emmanuel Villaume. Instead of Anna Netrebko and Piotr Beczala, however, we have Diana Damrau and Vittorio Grigolo in the leading roles, and the temperature

is quite different. Damrau, acting up a storm, works hard to bring shading and depth to her essentially bright and perky soprano, while Grigolo gives a performance of astonishing, animalistic intensity, his trumpet-like tenor banishing whatever echoes of Franco Corelli may have lingered in the auditorium from the nineteen-seventies. Russell Braun, Christophe Mortagne, and Nicolas Testé do vividly detailed work in smaller roles. (March 21 at 12:30.) • **Also playing:** The final performances of "*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*," featuring Matthew Polenzani, Karine Deshayes, Laurent

Naouri, Audrey Luna, Susanna Phillips, and Elena Maximova in the leading roles; James Levine conducts. (March 18 at 7:30 and March 21 at 8. Jennifer Johnson Cano replaces Deshayes on March 21.) • Originally seen in 2007, "*Lucia di Lammermoor*" was the first of three Met productions directed by Mary Zimmerman, whose deeply contextualized stagings have aroused mixed feelings among devoted operagoers. But this one, with its Victorian-era setting, has proved to be a worthy survivor. The latest revival features Albina Shagimuratova, who has appeared several

times at the house as Mozart's Queen of the Night, in the title role, with the honey-voiced tenor Joseph Calleja as her beloved and Luca Salsi as her disapproving brother; Maurizio Benini. (March 19 and March 24 at 7:30.) • The most recent revival of Verdi's early-period melodrama "*Ernani*" proved to be a fine vehicle for the young Met star Angela Meade. These performances, however, will also provide opportunities to appreciate the artistry of two great Met veterans, James Levine and Plácido Domingo (taking the baritone role of Don Carlo), whose recent work

A man and a woman are standing in a lush, vibrant jungle. The woman is wearing a sleeveless, knee-length dress with a black and white plaid pattern and a black belt. She is holding a black clutch bag and wearing a watch and a bracelet. The man is wearing a dark blue suit jacket over a dark blue polo shirt and dark blue trousers. He is wearing a watch. They are surrounded by large, green tropical leaves, including banana leaves and monstera leaves. There are several butterflies of different colors (pink, orange, white) flying around them. In the foreground, there is a small pond with pink lotus flowers and several colorful koi fish (red, orange, white).

Bal Harbour Shops

A TRULY UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

has not been as rock-solid reliable as in years past. The young tenor Francesco Meli, an enthusiastic exponent of bel canto, takes the ardent title role. (March 20 and March 23 at 7:30.) • The Met's annual **National Council Grand Finals Concert** allows several of the finest young singers in the U.S. and Canada to impress some of the world's most perceptive judges of talent, and, hopefully, to embark on major careers. The soprano Angela Meade, one of the most renowned of the recent winners, will host the event and also sing; Fabio Luisi, the company's principal conductor, is on the podium. (March 22 at 3.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic

The fast-rising pianist Inon Barnatan has been the Philharmonic's official artist-in-association all season, but only this week does he make his formal debut with the orchestra. Alan Gilbert will steer him through Ravel's Piano Concerto in G Major, the center of a program that also features "Nyx," by the stylish composer-conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen, and two works that marked the boundaries of modernism just before the First World War—Debussy's progressive ballet "Jeux" and Strauss's brashly neo-Romantic "Rosenkavalier" Suite. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656, March 19 and March 24 at 7:30 and March 20 at 11 A.M.)

London Symphony Orchestra

This first-among-equals of London orchestras has just announced the appointment of Simon Rattle as its

next music director. Its upcoming New York visit, however, will be led by one of the ensemble's principal conductors of the past—Michael Tilson Thomas, who leads it in music by Britten (the Four Sea Interludes from "Peter Grimes"), Gershwin (the Concerto in F, with the exciting pianist Yuja Wang), and Sibelius (the stirring Second Symphony). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. March 18 at 8.)

Philadelphia Orchestra and Joyce DiDonato

In a program curated by the beloved mezzo-soprano, the orchestra's music director, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, gives up the baton to the Metropolitan Opera maestro Maurizio Benini, who leads a gala-style program of arias and overtures by such bel-canto masters as Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, and Carafa. Two of DiDonato's outstanding Met colleagues, the soprano Nicole Cabell and the tenor Lawrence Brownlee, will also perform. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 18 at 8.)

RECITALS

Ecstatic Music Festival: Terry Riley 80th-Birthday Concert

One of the final events in Merkin Concert Hall's annual freewheeling survey of post-classical composition will be a toast to the man whose co-creation of American minimalism has earned him a lasting place in history. In the first part of the concert, artists such as the guitarist Gyan Riley (Terry's son) and the synthesizer player Lorna Dune, along with members of Merkin's Face the Music ensemble, will perform works in tribute to Riley; the evening ends with a massed performance of Riley's iconic work

from 1964, "In C." (129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. March 18 at 7:30.)

Takács Quartet

The smart and assured but deeply soulful ensemble, longtime favorites at Lincoln Center, returns to perform string quartets by Haydn (the "Emperor") and Debussy, as well as the Piano Quintet in A Major by Dvořák (with Joyce Yang). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. March 19 at 7:30.)

Lindemann Young Artists

For some thirty-five years, the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program has been grooming singers for the house's roster (including such stars as Stephanie Blythe and Nathan Gunn). Three of its current charges—the soprano Layla Claire, the tenor Andrew Stenson, and the bass-baritone Brandon Cedel—will perform in the Park Avenue Armory's exquisitely restored Board of Officers Room, offering a selection of songs by Beethoven, Brahms, Britten, Debussy, and others. (Park Ave. at 66th St. armoryonpark.org. March 19 at 7:30.)

Piotr Anderszewski

Musical insight and commanding technique meet in the work of this prince of European pianists. His upcoming program consists entirely of pieces by Bach (the French Overture in B Minor, BWV 831, and the English Suite No. 3 in G Minor) and Schumann (the Novelette in F-Sharp Minor, Op. 21, No. 8, and the Fantasy in C Major). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 19 at 8.)

The Knights: "Music of the Ides of March"

For its second "Blueshift" concert at the appealing downtown music club SubCulture, the dynamic Brooklyn collective offers works from across the centuries on the themes of deception, betrayal, and subversion. The musicians include the violinist Colin Jacobsen, the clarinetist Romie de Guise-Langlois, and the pianist Steven Beck; the repertoire features pieces by Haydn, Schnittke, Timo Andres ("Fast Flows the River," with the composer sitting in on piano), Fred Lerdahl, and Thomas Adès ("Cardiac Arrest"). (45 Bleecker St. subculturenewyork.com. March 19 at 8.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

A trio of superb young musicians—the violinist Benjamin Beilman, the cellist Jan Vogler, and the pianist Juho Pohjonen—take on pieces by two composers whose music is not only emotionally communicative but complex and contradictory as well: Schubert (including the titanic Piano Trio in B-Flat Major, Op. 99)

and Schnittke (the Sonata No. 1 for Cello and Piano). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. March 20 at 7:30.)

Brooklyn Art Song Society

Daron Hagen, an honored composer of songs in the tradition of Samuel Barber and Ned Rorem, collaborates with the pianist Michael Brofman, the director of the Society, for a concert that puts several of Hagen's works (including "Larkin Songs" and "After Words") in context with music by Britten, Schubert (selections from "Winterreise"), Weill, and Wolf (the pitch-black "Michelangelo Lieder"). The soprano Justine Aronson and the tenor Joseph Gaines are among the featured performers. (Tenri Cultural Institute, 43A W. 13th St. brooklynartsongsociety.org. March 20 at 7:30.)

Eighth Blackbird

The ensemble, a seminal influence on a generation of new-music performers, collaborates with the composer-accordionist Michael Ward-Bergeman in a concert of impassioned music centering on love and death by Monteverdi, Gesualdo, Bryce Dessner, Bon Iver, and others. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. symphonyspace.org. March 21 at 8.)

"Meredith Monk and Friends"

An extraordinary group of musicians from the classical, new-music, and jazz worlds—including the Bang on a Can All-Stars, Don Byron, Jessye Norman, John Zorn, and Victoire—gather to celebrate Carnegie Hall's composer chair in an all-Monk program featuring music from her opera "Atlas," selections from "Songs of Ascension," and other pieces. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. March 22 at 3.)

George London Foundation Recital Series

The countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo and the soprano Nadine Sierra bring the curtain down on this season's series, which spotlights first-rate young vocal talent, with an engaging program of songs by Schubert, Duparc, Liszt, and Ned Rorem, as well as operatic selections by Handel. (Morgan Library & Museum, Madison Ave. at 36th St. 212-956-2809. March 22 at 4:30.)

Nikolai Lugansky

Lugansky, an enduring Russian pianist with power to spare, likes his repertoire on the conservative side: works by Schubert (including the Sonata in C Minor, D. 958) and Tchaikovsky (excerpts from "The Seasons," along with the same composer's stentorian "Grand Sonata" in G Major, Op. 37). This concert marks his debut at the 92nd Street Y. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. March 24 at 7:30.)

OF NOTE

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY

Visits to Carnegie Hall by this bright and brilliant American orchestra, directed by the universally admired David Robertson, are always welcome; its next concert intersects with the hall's season-long emphasis on the music of its current composer chair, Meredith Monk. The New York premiere of Monk's "Weave" (featuring the singers Katie Geissinger and Theo Bleckmann and members of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus) will be preceded by music by another composer sensitive to texture, Debussy ("Nocturnes"), and followed by Tchaikovsky's turbulent Fourth Symphony. (212-247-7800. March 20 at 8.)

"NEW DANCES OF THE LEAGUE OF DAVID"

The excellent pianist David Kaplan, in a tribute to Robert Schumann, has commissioned a clutch of short works designed to be interspersed with the highly varied movements of the Master's piano cycle "Davidsbündlertänze," including pieces by such outstanding composers as Samuel Carl Adams, Martin Bresnick, Ted Hearne, Gabriel Kahane, and Augusta Read Thomas. He plays them all this week at Le Poisson Rouge. (158 Bleecker St. lprnyc.com. March 22 at 6.)



NO EXCUSES

OUR VISION IS FOR AN INDUSTRY WHERE HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABILITY ARE NOT THE EFFECT OF A PARTICULAR INITIATIVE, BUT THE CAUSE OF A BUSINESS WELL RUN. WHERE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICES ARE NOT UNFORTUNATE OUTCOMES, BUT REASONS TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY. WHERE EXCUSES ARE IGNORED AND ACTION IS TAKEN.

WE'RE WORKING TOWARD A WORLD IN WHICH THE CLOTHES YOU LOVE TO WEAR CREATE NOTHING BUT LOVE.

VISION2020

**EILEEN
FISHER**



The cinematographer Sean Price Williams films Kentucker Audley in Charles Poekel's film "Christmas, Again."

THEIR GENERATION

New traditions in American independent filmmaking.

WHILE SHOWCASING FRESH TALENT from around the world, this year's edition of the "New Directors/New Films" series (held jointly at Film Society of Lincoln Center and MOMA, March 18-29) also spotlights major trends in American independent filmmaking.

Charles Poekel's first feature, "**Christmas, Again**" (March 24 and March 28), is the kind of unflinching yet tender New York sidewalk story that risks becoming a cliché of downbeat naturalism. It's about a lonely young man—too aptly named Noel—who gets drawn into sentimental adventures while selling Christmas trees on the frigid streets of Greenpoint. Yet Poekel skirts this risk, and creates a minor marvel of quasi-documentary discovery, by way of a method that is at the core of contemporary independent filmmaking—bringing together a cast and crew of young independent-film regulars.

Noel is played by Kentucker Audley, a director as well as an actor (Amy Seimetz's "Sun Don't Shine"). Lydia, a young woman whom Noel shelters in his trailer, is played by Hannah Gross, who, at twenty-two, has already acted in films by Matt Porterfield, Nathan Silver, and Dustin Guy Defa. Poekel's crew is headed by the cinematographer Sean Price Williams and the editor Robert Greene (the director of "Actress"), who have worked on some of the best recent independent films, including "Listen Up Philip."

Poekel's cast and crew are, in effect, a movie-in-a-box—just add a director and an idea—and they realize Poekel's sense of lived-in, firsthand experience. The actors deliver alert, relaxed performances devoid of theatrical flourishes. Williams's handheld camera work is attuned to their slightest gestures, and Greene's abrupt association of images suggests leaps of memory and imagination. The film's tone is instantly recognizable as a sort of modernist classicism, even as it reflects the director's subtle, spontaneous moods.

The director Rick Alverson gives the age-old trope of the unfunny comedian an extreme new twist in "**Entertainment**" (March 29). Gregg Turkington, who performs

under the name Neil Hamburger, here adopts that persona for the Comedian, an awkward, hangdog standup whose wheezy riffs tend toward the embarrassingly inappropriate. Booked in depressing venues (his first show is in a prison), he responds to hecklers with ugly sexual invective that makes Don Rickles seem like Mister Rogers.

Alverson films the Comedian's lonely tour in the California desert with poised widescreen images that lend his grubby wanderings the mythic grandeur of a classic Western. The film is both jagged and suave, like an orchestrated concept album by a garage band. The cast—including John C. Reilly, as the Comedian's prosperous cousin (who advises him to cut the references to semen), Michael Cera, Dean Stockwell, Seimetz, and Defa—completes Alverson's full-circle union of underground exotica and Hollywood legend.

—Richard Brody



“I WANT AN INVESTMENT
PLAN FOCUSED ON MY NEEDS,
NOT ON FEES.”

*iShares Funds can help you
keep more of what you earn.*

STRENGTHEN YOUR PORTFOLIO WITH ISHARES CORE FUNDS.

Low cost. 1/10th the cost of a typical mutual fund.¹

Tax efficient. 95% of iShares Funds did not pay capital gains taxes in 2014.²

Diversified. Access a range of investments in a single fund.

So what do I do with my money?®

Visit iShares.com and speak with your financial advisor.

iShares®
by BLACKROCK®

IVV

iShares Core
S&P 500 Fund

IJH

iShares Core
S&P Mid-Cap Fund

IJR

iShares Core
S&P Small-Cap Fund

BlackRock is trusted to manage more money than any other investment firm in the world.³

1. Morningstar, as of 12/31/14. Comparison is between the Prospectus Net Expense Ratio for the average iShares Core Series ETFs (0.12%) and the average Open-End Mutual Fund (1.27%) available in the U.S.
2. BlackRock, as of 12/31/14. 3. Based on \$4.652T in AUM as of 12/31/14. Visit www.iShares.com or www.BlackRock.com to view a prospectus, which includes investment objectives, risks, fees, expenses and other information that you should read and consider carefully before investing. Risk includes principal loss. Small-cap companies are more volatile and less liquid than larger capitalization companies. Transactions in shares of ETFs will result in brokerage commissions and will generate tax consequences. All regulated investment companies are obliged to distribute portfolio gains to shareholders. Past distributions not indicative of future distributions. Diversification may not protect against market risk or principal loss. Funds distributed by BlackRock Investments, LLC (BRIL). The iShares Funds are not sponsored, endorsed, issued, sold or promoted by S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC (S&P), nor does this company make any representation regarding the advisability of investing in the Funds. BRIL is not affiliated with S&P. ©2015 BlackRock, Inc. All rights reserved. ISHARES, BLACKROCK and SO WHAT DO I DO WITH MY MONEY are registered trademarks of BlackRock, Inc., or its subsidiaries. IS-14049-0115

OPENING AMOUR FOU

Reviewed in Now Playing.
Opening March 18. (Film
Forum.)

DANNY COLLINS

A comic drama, about a now elderly rock star (Al Pacino) who discovers a forty-year-old letter from John Lennon. Directed by Dan Fogelman. Opening March 20. (In limited release.)

THE GUNMAN

Sean Penn stars in this thriller, as a hit man who wants out of the criminal life. Directed by Pierre Morel; co-starring Jasmine Trinca and Javier Bardem. Opening March 20. (In wide release.)

INSURGENT

An adaptation of the second book in the "Divergent" trilogy, about teen-agers in a futuristic society facing apocalyptic war. Directed by Robert Schwentke; starring Shailene Woodley, Miles Teller, and Ansel Elgort. Opening March 20. (In wide release.)

KUMIKO, THE TREASURE HUNTER

David Zellner directed this drama, about a Japanese woman (Rinko Kikuchi) who believes that a VHS tape of the film "Fargo" is a treasure map. Opening March 18. (In limited release.)

LA SAPIENZA

A drama, directed by Eugène Green, about an architect (Fabrizio Rongione) who seeks artistic renewal. Opening March 20. (In limited release.)

SHE'S LOST CONTROL

Anja Marquardt directed this drama, about a sex surrogate (Brooke Bloom) whose work affects her private life. Opening March 20. (In limited release.)

REVIVALS AND FESTIVALS

Titles in bold are reviewed.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

"The Killer Must Kill Again!" March 20 at 7 and March 24 at 9: "Tenebrae" (1982, Dario Argento). • March 21 at 7: "The Short Night of Glass Dolls" (1971, Aldo Lado).

BAM CINÉMATEK

"Black & White 'Scope: American Cinema." March 18 at 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "The Tarnished Angels." • "Cuba: Golden '60s." March 20 at 8: "Lucía" (1968, Humberto Solás). • March 21 at 6:45 and 9:15: "Memories of

NOW PLAYING

Amour Fou

The real-life turbulent endgame of the seminal German Romantic writer Heinrich von Kleist and his beloved, Henriette Vogel, as adapted by the director Jessica Hausner, is reduced to a wan drama and an unintended comedy. The action takes place near Berlin in 1811, when the thirtyish Kleist becomes obsessed with the idea of a suicide pact with a woman—he'd shoot her and then himself. Unable to persuade one of his cousins, he sets his sights on Henriette, a wife and mother with an unfulfilled penchant for music, whose secret discontent is liberated by Kleist's world-weary rhetoric. Their chaste affair kicks into high gear when Henriette is given a diagnosis of terminal cancer, at which point she's raring to go with him into that good night, and Kleist, who talks big, gets cold feet. Hausner's passion is for the psychosomatic, as in a scene of hypnosis that's meant to probe the emotional roots of Henriette's illness. The director looks empathetically at lives of convention and duty that stifle romance and desire, but she reduces the fiery literary lovers to ciphers. The colorful costumes and décor have more character than the blandly coached cast, and the stiff, tableau-like images are a vain artistic pose. In German.—*Richard Brody* (Film Forum.)

Blue Velvet

Written and directed by David Lynch, this is possibly the only coming-of-age movie in which sex has the danger and the heightened excitement of a horror picture. The charged erotic atmosphere makes the film something of a hallucination, but Lynch's humor keeps breaking through, too. His fantasies may come from his unconscious, but he recognizes them for what they are, and he's tickled by them. The film is consciously purplish and consciously funny, and the two work together in an original, down-home way. The setting is an archetypal small, sleepy city in an indefinite mythic present that feels like the past, and Kyle MacLachlan is Jeffrey, a clean-cut young man who's scared of his dirty thoughts (but wants to have them anyway). He commutes between the blue lady of the night (Isabella Rossellini, who's a dream of a freak) and the sunshine girl he loves (Laura Dern). The movie's aural-visual humor and poetry are sustained despite the wobbly plot and other weaknesses. Lynch's use of irrational material works the way it's supposed to: we read his images at some not fully conscious level. With Dennis Hopper, who gives the movie a jolt of horrific energy, and Dean Stockwell, who is a smiling wonder as Ben the Sandman. Released in 1986.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of the Moving Image; March 21-22.)

Buzzard

The second shot of Joel Potrykus's second feature offers a cinematic high: a five-minute-plus closeup of a pale, scruffy, moon-eyed, blandly insolent young man pulling a fast one. Marty Jackitansky (Joshua Burge) tells a bank officer to close his account and then reopens it immediately for the fifty-dollar new-account bonus. Marty, a temp at the same bank, is a brazen master of gaming the system; he returns the bank's office supplies to a store for cash and calls consumer hot lines to demand refunds—but, when he steals small refund checks meant for the bank's customers, it's a scam too far. Fearing arrest, Marty goes on the run. Potrykus constructs Marty as an Emma Bovary in thrall to horror movies and headbanger rock, a raging king of anomie and attitude in a suburban, futureless wasteland. (The director co-stars as Marty's only friend, Derek, a super-nerdy colleague.) Marty remains blank even as his violent fantasies break through to reality, but his tenuous connection to his family and the countdown of his scant funds sketch a chilling story. Potrykus's puckishly outrageous visions are short on insight, but they pack an enduring hallucinatory power.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

Chappie

Neill Blomkamp's new film returns him to Johannesburg, where his first—and his most incisive—feature, "District 9," took place. The power of that movie derived, in part, from the sardonic glance that it cast on racial divisions, but those are barely touched upon here; if he holds anything up to scrutiny now (and you can't always tell, amid the sound and fury), it is the unregulated craze for law and order. Gun-toting police drones are already on the streets, but a young computer expert (Dev Patel) seeks something more refined: a robot that can think and feel for itself. The result is Chappie (voiced by Sharlto Copley), who is no sooner created than he is hijacked by hoodlums and taught to dress, talk, and fight like a gang member. But will he obey only those instructions, or somehow become a wiser and more delicate droid? And does the world really need artificially intelligent poets, anyway? These questions are thrown away as the movie accelerates into brashness, urged on by a phalanx of poor performances—the prime offenders being Ninja and Yo-Landi Visser, from the South African rap-rave outfit Die Antwoord. Hugh Jackman, dressed as a big-game hunter in shorts and boots, and armed with a haircut that could stop a rhino, plays the evil maker of another robot—a tank-style destroyer, clearly borrowed from the set of "RoboCop." The principal charm of the film arises from Chappie's ears,

which prick up and droop like those of a titanium rabbit.—*Anthony Lane* (In wide release.)

China Is Near

A witty, subtly freakish comedy about sex and politics, directed by Marco Bellocchio in a fluid style that is full of surprises. Bellocchio's characters are as much a private zoo as Buñuel's; the five principals, who are so awful they're funny, use one another in every way they can, and the film is structured like a classic comic opera. (It has all of the intricacy and the boudoir complications.) Among the five are a pair of working-class lovers—a secretary and a Socialist functionary—who scheme to marry into the rich landed gentry. Their targets are a portbellied professor (Gluco Mauri), who is running for municipal office on the Socialist ticket, and his sister (Elda Tattoli), a great lady who lets every man in town climb on top of her but won't marry because, socially, they're all beneath her. The fifth is the younger brother in the rich household—a prissy, sneering seventeen-year-old Maoist. As the pairs of lovers combine and recombine and the five become one big, ghastly family (with a yapping little dog as an emblem of domesticity), Bellocchio makes it all rhyme. The camera glides in and out and around the action; it moves as simply and with as much apparent ease as if it were attached to the director's forehead. Released in 1968.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; March 20-26.)

Cinderella

The true believer, not the smart-ass, is the target of this new live-action telling of the fairy tale. The writer, Chris Weitz, and the director, Kenneth Branagh, allow no knowing winks to obscure our view of the story: Cinderella (Lily James) suffers first the death of her mother (Hayley Atwell) and then the marriage of her doting father (Ben Chaplin) to Lady Tremaine (Cate Blanchett), whose dreadful daughters (Holliday Grainger and Sophie McShera) come as part of the package. We are granted, as required, a fairy godmother (Helena Bonham Carter), a golden coach sprung from a pumpkin, a ball, a slipper, and a prince (Richard Madden). The whole movie, despite its chest of digital tricks, is almost heroically old-fashioned; the effect is to confirm the irrepressible force of the Cinderella myth and the archetypes that it enfolds. Assistance is given, in rapturous style, by Sandy Powell's costumes and by the production design of Dante Ferretti. But did nobody at Disney think of asking another Italian master, Ennio Morricone, to bestow his gifts? The score, by Patrick Doyle, is efficiently grand, but a myth as memorable as this demands a theme to match.—*A.L.* (Reviewed in our issue of 3/16/15.) (In wide release.)

The Cobbler

This dramatic fantasy is based entirely on the homophony of "sole" and "soul." It's the story of Max Simkin (Adam Sandler), a lonely Lower East Side shoemaker and a vestige of the neighborhood's bygone days; he lives with his increasingly senile mother (Lynn Cohen) in Sheepshead Bay, and both of them miss his father, who ran off years ago. Max discovers that an old sole-repair machine in his shop's basement endows shoes with a strange power: when he puts them on, he is transformed physically (but not mentally) into their owner. Soon, he gets drawn into a pair of plots—one involving a grotesquely caricatured young black gangster (Method Man) and one involving a predatory landlord (Ellen Barkin). The conceit is both ridiculous and clever, but the director, Tom McCarthy, pushes it to facile conclusions without tapping its deeper potential, as in a weirdly Oedipal scene in which Max turns into his father (who is played by Dustin Hoffman). With Steve Buscemi, as the barber next door, and Melonie Diaz, as a community activist.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

Fifty Shades of Grey

The setting is Washington State, the place where love gets weird. Could there be something in the rain? Boy meets girl, but there's always a hitch; in "Twilight," the boy was a vampire, and now, in Sam Taylor-Johnson's gloomy new film, the girl is swept off her feet, only to discover that the boy wants to tie her up by the wrists. It's like an R-rated game of Twister. The script was adapted by Kelly Marcel from the golden-tongued best-seller by E. L. James, but not quite adapted enough. Christian Grey (Jamie Dornan) remains as dreary as ever, despite the snugness of his torture room and his peculiar habit of sitting down to play Chopin, molto adagio, at the drop of a riding crop. As Anastasia Steele, the bashful student who yearns for him, Dakota Johnson strives courageously, and even finds traces of wit in the role, but she still bumps into the old, disheartening question: would the girl adore the boy if it weren't for his billions, his blinding white shirts, and the ride she gets on his chopper? Warning: the film contains whipping scenes, which some pastry chefs may find distressing.—*A.L.* (2/23 & 3/2/15) (In wide release.)

Focus

This comic thriller begins as a twist on the classic crime romance "Trouble in Paradise": two smooth grifters, the veteran Nicky (Will Smith) and the novice Jess (Margot Robbie), pick each other's pocket and thus seal a partnership made in heaven. Nicky teaches Jess some secrets and recruits her for his high-class, quasi-corporate

criminal team, which moves into New Orleans to fleece the yokels in town for a Super Bowl-like event. A compulsive gambler who risks the team's bankroll, Nicky is also a consummate professional who's unwilling to take a chance on love. But he and Jess meet again later in Buenos Aires, where they're working opposite sides of a Formula One race. Smith is breezy, canny, and understated, and Robbie hides scalpel-sharp wiles behind a poker face, but the writers and directors, Glenn Ficarra and John Requa, submerge the stars' easy chemistry in a murky stew of clever yet absurd plot twists of a nearly superheroic hyperbole. That sound you hear is the high fives in the writers' room, and that, unfortunately, is where the filmmakers' focus remains. With Adrian Martinez, as an able accomplice with no verbal filter, and Gerald McRaney, as a crusty arm-twister who is proud of his craft.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

Grey Gardens

The wreckage left by Gatsbyesque frivolity is plumbed to desperate depths in Albert and David Maysles's 1975 documentary, about a formerly wealthy mother and daughter, erstwhile luminaries of the society pages, living in squalid chaos in their once glorious East Hampton estate. Edith Ewing Bouvier Beale (born in 1895), called Big Edie, was Jackie Onassis's aunt; her daughter, Edith Bouvier Beale, Little Edie (born in 1917), was Onassis's cousin. Before the filming started, Onassis came to their rescue, getting their pest-infested, garbage-filled home cleaned up to save it from condemnation by the health authorities, but the Maysles catch the Beales on the downturn again. Performing flamboyantly for the filmmakers and hungrily seeking their approval, mother and daughter spill their lifelong recriminations over the circumstances that led to their isolation, poverty, and folie à deux. The pathos is heightened by Big Edie's bedridden singing of classic show tunes: she's a graceful master of timing and tone, a nearly great artist who squandered her chances and her life. Little Edie, still clinging to vestiges of youth and inflamed with desire, nearly raves for David Maysles as she performs majorette routines from her junior-college days. Rarely have high spirits and theatrical energy seemed like such a tragic waste; an era and its myths seem to be dying onscreen, in real time. Directed by the Maysles brothers, Ellen Hovde, and Muffie Meyer.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

It Follows

The setting of David Robert Mitchell's film is Detroit, and he makes full use of its contrasts: placid suburban neighborhoods give way to the untenanted and the derelict.

When the surface of life is so easily cracked, it comes as no surprise that horror, like disease, can worm its way in. So it is that the teen-ager Jay (Maika Monroe) inherits a nameless plague. After sex in a car, she finds herself stalked by one remorseless figure after another; she alone can see them, but they will wipe her out unless she can pass the curse on to somebody else, by carnal means. How you interpret this doomy state of affairs will depend on your response to Mitchell's narrative rhythms; in between the frights that jump out at irregular intervals, he lets the action slide into anomie, as the heroine and her friends, one of whom keeps quoting Dostoyevsky, drift through their bored and all but adulthood days. Violent extinction, in such a light, becomes just one of those things. With Keir Gilchrist, as a fine-boned boy who would die for the love of Jay.—*A.L.* (3/16/15) (In limited release.)

Kingsman: The Secret Service

The new film from Matthew Vaughn, who made "Kick-Ass" and "X-Men: First Class," is about a British organization, dedicated to the common good, that lurks behind a tailoring establishment in London's Savile Row. It comprises a Camelot of knightly spies, each with an appropriate alias. Galahad (Colin Firth), for instance, answers to Arthur (Michael Caine), and relies on the technical wizardry of Merlin (Mark Strong). Their current task is to trounce the nefarious Valentine (Samuel L. Jackson), who plans to brainwash the cell-phone users of the world. (Whether this really needs doing, the film never dares to ask.) In the process, Galahad must call on the streetwise skills of Eggsy (Taron Egerton), who is gradually groomed for a world of bespoke gadgets and flattering suits. The movie whips along, snatching laughs where it can, desperately aping the early style of 007, but it's also content to uphold social distinctions that would have looked creaky half a century ago, and not everyone will savor the mismatch between the discreet manners of the agents and the unhinged restlessness of the director's approach. If you don't fancy watching Firth commit bone-crushing mayhem, look away.—*A.L.* (2/16/15) (In wide release.)

Maps to the Stars

David Cronenberg goes to Hollywood. His latest film lands him in new territory, although the terrors and obsessions that infect his characters are familiar enough. Julianne Moore, unleashed, plays an actress named Havana, who is both plagued by visions of her late mother (Sarah Gadon) and hellbent on grabbing a role in a forthcoming quasi-remake of a movie for which her mother was famous. No less fretful are Stafford Weiss (John Cusack), a self-help

Underdevelopment." • March 22 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Death of a Bureaucrat" (1966, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea).

FILM FORUM

In revival. March 20-26 (call for showtimes): "China Is Near." • The films of D. W. Griffith. March 23 at 7:10: "Orphans of the Storm" (1922).

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

"New Directors/New Films." March 19 at 6:30: "Tired Moonlight" (2014, Britni West). • March 19 at 9: "The Creation of Meaning" (2014, Simone Rapisarda Casanova). • March 20 at 6:30: "Tu Dors Nicole" (2014, Stéphane Lafleur). • March 21 at 1:15: "Violet" (2014, Bas Devos). • March 22 at 5:30: "Theeb" (2014, Naji Abu Nowar). • March 22 at 8:15: "Mercuriales" (2014, Virgil Vernier). • March 23 at 8:45: "Western" (2015, Bill and Turner Ross).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

The films of Benoît Jacquot. March 24 at 4 and 7:30: "Farewell, My Queen" (2012).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"New Directors/New Films." March 18 at 7 and 8: "The Diary of a Teenage Girl" (2014, Marielle Heller). • March 19 at 6:15: "Violet" (2014, Bas Devos). • March 20 at 6:15: "The Creation of Meaning" (2014, Simone Rapisarda Casanova). • March 21 at 3:30: "Tired Moonlight" (2014, Britni West). • March 21 at 9: "Theeb" (2014, Naji Abu Nowar). • March 22 at 3:30: "Western" (2015, Bill and Turner Ross). • March 23 at 8:45: "Parabellum" (2014, Evan Johnson). • March 24 at 6: "Christmas, Again" (2014, Charles Poekel).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

"Mad Men's Movie Influences." March 20 at 9:15: "The Apartment" (1960, Billy Wilder), introduced by Matthew Weiner. • March 21 at 1:30 and March 22 at 4: "Vertigo." • March 21 at 4 and March 22 at 7: "Blue Velvet."



MOVIE OF THE WEEK

A video discussion of Terrence Malick's "The Tree of Life," from 2011, in our digital edition and online.

guru, and his wife, Christina (Olivia Williams), who can barely cope with their son Benjie (Evan Bird), already a star—and almost a monster—at thirteen. Then, there is Havana's assistant, Agatha (Mia Wasikowska), freshly arrived in Los Angeles and bearing the scars not just of a fire but also of deeper traumas within. What matters here is not the plot, such as it is, but the unsavory knowledge that everything we see—the movie industry, the family unit—is coiled and bent in on itself. Hints of incest and conflagration abound, and the young refer to anybody older than themselves as “menopausal.” Cronenberg eases through this damaged landscape with his usual aplomb, neither blinking nor shrinking; by the end, despite that composure, you can't wait to get out of town. With Robert Pattinson, as a chauffeur. Written by Bruce Wagner.—*A.L.* (3/9/15) (In limited release.)

Memories of Underdevelopment

This audacious, sensual portrait of an alienated intellectual in the early days of Castro's Cuba, released in 1968, is one of the great movies of its era. The director, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, puts the audience in the head of a would-be writer (Sergio Corrieri, in a marvellous performance), who comes to understand just how conflicted he is about everything—class and sex included. There's a ruthless, universal brand of comedy in his more fatuous deeds and utterances: he views the Revolution as his personal revenge against the stupidity of the Cuban bourgeoisie. But the movie is also full of tough-minded mystery. The classic sequence of the writer taking a girl to the Hemingway Museum is rich with ironies about the interplay of art, celebrity, and social conscience. Alea adapted the novel “Inconsolable Memories,” by Edmundo Desnoes. In Spanish.—*Michael Sragow* (BAM Cinémathèque; March 21.)

'71

A raw young soldier (Jack O'Connell) on his first deployment in the British Army, during the year of the title, is separated from his platoon and stranded in unfriendly territory on the darkening streets of Belfast. O'Connell has few lines of dialogue, and his near-silence adds to his air of bewilderment, and to our sympathy for his plight. The hero falls back on his training and his wits, but they can bear him only so far through this alien zone. The writer, Gregory Burke, and the director, Yann Demange, deliberately steep us in the murk of sectarianism and the tangled stratagems of undercover agents—so much so that viewers hoping to learn about the early years of the Troubles in Northern Ireland may emerge from the film more perplexed than they were at

the start. Much of the movie is implausible, if you stop to think about it; yet you don't stop, so stealthily do its shadows draw you in.—*A.L.* (3/9/15) (In limited release.)

Seymour: An Introduction

Ethan Hawke directed this documentary, about Seymour Bernstein, a pianist, now in his late eighties, who, in 1977, renounced the duties and the anxieties of a public performer and became a piano teacher—by no means a lesser calling, as the film is at pains to prove. Even non-musicians have been struck by the vigor of Bernstein's wisdom, among them Hawke, who met him one evening and “felt kind of safe around him.” If anything, the sweetness of the subject's nature and the gentle modulations of his speaking voice are so potent that it would seem not just uncivil but futile to contradict him; yet Hawke is too alert and too inquiring to let the movie subside into worship. The kindly surface is broken by brisker moments: clips of master classes, tryouts of different Steinways, memories of playing for front-line troops in Korea, and pedagogic advice that cuts hard against the American grain: “I'm not so sure that a major career is a healthy thing to embark upon,” Bernstein says. Hawke is seeking not to reclaim a forgotten figure or to argue for his status but to follow his challenging lead; this apparently soothing movie wants to shake us up.—*A.L.* (In limited release.)

3 Hearts

A splendid melodramatic mechanism, spoiled by a bland and complacent realization. Marc (Benoît Poelvoorde), a dumpy tax inspector in his mid-forties on business in a provincial French town, misses his train back to Paris. Looking for a hotel late at night, he chats up Sylvie (Charlotte Gainsbourg), a casually stylish woman whom he meets in passing. They quickly fall for each other and—without exchanging phone numbers or e-mail addresses—make a date for the following Friday in Paris. But Marc doesn't show up, and Sylvie slinks off to Minneapolis with her former boyfriend. Soon thereafter, Marc returns to the provincial city and falls in love with another of its residents, Sophie (Chiara Mastroianni), but, before marrying her, he discovers that she's Sylvie's sister. The plot is a well-formed skeleton that leaves the essentials to be filled out. The director, Benoît Jacquot, renders the characters fleshless and mindless, without memories, inclinations, or ideas, reducing them to propellants of suspense in picturesque settings devoid of context. A few plunging camera moves and careful framings, and the appealing presence of skillful actors, don't compensate for the lazy lack of psychological or sym-

bolic imagination. With Catherine Deneuve, as the sisters' mother. In French.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

The Tarnished Angels

In 1932, an itinerant troupe of stunt fliers and air racers at a New Orleans waterfront fairground draws the attention of Burke Devlin (Rock Hudson), an ambitious and colorful journalist. His fascination with Roger Shumann (Robert Stack), a First World War ace pilot with a lust for danger, is amplified by his attraction to the flier's wife, LaVerne (Dorothy Malone), a flashy blond parachute jumper and an object of desire wherever she goes—for Roger's crack mechanic, Jiggs (Jack Carson), and for all the hangers-on, but not for Roger himself, who's ready to betray her for a serviceable airplane. In this 1957 adaptation of William Faulkner's novel “Pylon,” the director, Douglas Sirk, mines exotic Americana—the rustic carnival, supercharged with industrial technology—for an enduring philosophical strain of feminist endurance in a land that's both made and menaced by its intrepid male warriors. With its tangled shadows, fun-house mirrors, wrenching angles, and glaring lights, the wide-screen black-and-white photography evokes the psychological dislocations and distortions of the film's band of reckless and rootless outsiders, and expressionistically thrusts Sirk's direction front and center, even as the script's grand melodrama puts the teller of tales at the heart of the story.—*R.B.* (BAM Cinémathèque; March 18.)

Vertigo

Alfred Hitchcock's audaciously intricate melodrama, from 1958, concerns an acrophobic detective (James Stewart) who spurns the attentions of a fashion illustrator (Barbara Bel Geddes) to pursue his frustrated passion for a chilly, suicidal platinum-blond woman of mystery (Kim Novak). It's as much a wonder of suspense as it is a catalogue of the director's themes and an allegory for his own art of enticement—and for the erotic pitfalls of his métier. Novak's famous transformations, Stewart's haunted fabrications, and Bel Geddes's unrequited longing are all tethered to the whim of another master plotter, the detective's long-lost friend (Tom Helmore), whose marital suspicions are the MacGuffin with which Hitchcock unfurls his own obsessions: the tragic difference between friendship and love, the seductive power of style and disguise, the proximity of lust and madness, and the inseparability of sex from suspense, danger, and death. (The story is, among other things, a template for how Hitchcock makes a borrowed story his own.) The irrepressible allure of Hitchcock's visual extravagance—his baroque swirl of caustic greens,

voluptuous purples, acidic yellows, and fiery reds, and the indecent glare of daylight—conjures a torrent of unconscious desires beyond the realm of dramatic machinations; his happy ending, of health restored and crime punished, resembles an aridly monastic renunciation.—*R.B.* (Museum of the Moving Image; March 21-22.)

What We Do in the Shadows

A mock documentary from New Zealand, written and directed by Jemaine Clement (from “Flight of the Conchords”) and Taika Waititi. They also star, as two of four vampires who share a house in Wellington, doing their best to blend in with—and occasionally feast upon—the local community. The basic conceit sounds wearisome; if Mel Brooks and Leslie Nielsen couldn't make bloodsucking funny in “Dead and Loving It,” what hope is there for anyone else? From this unpromising material, however, Clement and Waititi have fashioned something sprightly and smart, stuffed with gags from the start and trimmed with an unexpected charm. Time and again, the exotic (or simply messy) needs of the heroes are set off against the blandness of their environs—and, most notably, of their unbitten pals, such as Stu (Stuart Rutherford) and Jackie (Jackie van Beek), who refuse to be awed by the presence of the undead. Like all effective spoofs, the movie sinks its teeth so deeply into its chosen genre that the impression may turn out to be permanent; from now on, trying to watch the “Twilight” films with a straight face will feel harder than ever before.—*A.L.* (2/16/15) (In limited release.)

Wild Tales

The Argentinean writer-director Damián Szifron's dark comedy is composed of six sketchlike variations on themes of anger and revenge. All six feature mildly clever twists that are themselves the point, making any description a spoiler. The premises involve a peculiar airplane voyage, a restaurant where a waitress serves a lifelong enemy, a case of road rage on a desolate highway, a demolition engineer with a grudge against the motor-vehicles bureau, a hit-and-run accident caused by a wealthy businessman's son, and a Jewish wedding where the bride's suspicions lead to mayhem. Each of the segments involves violence and illustrates the arrogance of the wealthy and powerful, but their moralizing is as facile as the plotting is mechanical. The deliberate pacing is calculated to underline the swerves in the script, which offers little in the way of context or characterization. Szifron's brightly lit theatrics and simplistic attitudes seem borrowed from television commercials. In Spanish.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

NIGHT LIFE

ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors lead complicated lives; it's advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.

Dave Alvin and Phil Alvin

The brothers are known for not getting along, but Phil's near-death experience, a few years ago, and their mutual love of the blues have reunited them. In the late seventies, they formed the L.A. punk-roots band the Blasters, in which Phil was the lead vocalist and Dave was the chief songwriter and guitarist. In the tradition of the Everly Brothers, the Kinks, Oasis, and other great but doomed sibling acts, the band splintered in the mid-eighties. Then, in 2012, during a Blasters tour in Spain, Phil had respiratory issues and flatlined. He recovered, and the two have since delivered their first album together in nearly thirty years, "Common Ground," a lively reimagining of material recorded by Big Bill Broonzy. (March 18: The Bell House, 149 7th St., Brooklyn. 718-643-6510. March 19: City Winery, 155 Varick St. 212-608-0555.)

Karla Bonoff and Jimmy Webb

Bonoff, who worked with Linda Ronstadt and Wendy Waldman before releasing her self-titled debut album, in 1977, continues to remain active (she contributed a beautiful version of "Something Fine" to "Looking Into You," the Jackson Browne tribute album that came out last year). On March 24, she shares the stage with the great pop composer Webb ("MacArthur Park," "Up, Up and Away," "By the Time I Get to Phoenix"). In addition to their solo sets, the two Californians will perform a song or two together. (City Winery, 155 Varick St. 212-608-0555.)

Cold War Kids

In 2006, this Southern California act made a splash with its soulful and sui-generis piano-driven debut, "Robbers & Cowards," which attracted widespread attention and sold nearly two million copies. It seemed like the group was on track to being the next big indie-rock sensation. But the Kids suffered from a confused backlash that focussed too much on their association with Christianity. They also went through a few personnel changes and stylistic experiments. Their fifth album, "Hold My Home," finds them reaching for arena-ready, radio-friendly pop songs. (Terminal 5, 610 W. 56th St. 212-582-6600. March 20.)

"The Music of David Byrne & Talking Heads"

For the past eleven years, Michael Dorf, the entrepreneur, philanthropist, and music impresario who founded the Knitting Factory and City Winery, has produced tribute shows at Carnegie Hall to raise funds for music-education programs for underprivileged youth. The acts featured this year have been influential for so long that it's easy to forget how many styles of music they brought



CeeLo Green, Esperanza Spalding, Cibo Matto, and many others channel David Byrne, at Carnegie Hall.

together on their records and on concert stages—jittery post-punk, singer-songwriter sweetness, Afrobeat, dance music, and straightforward rock and roll. Artists as diverse as the Brazilian singer **Bebel Gilberto**, the hip-hop polymaths the **Roots**, the guitar god **Billy Gibbons** (of ZZ Top), and the folk songwriter and storyteller **Todd Snider**, along with many others, are set to perform. Not many programs accommodate all these talents—rhythm, polyrhythm, idealism, surrealism, introspection, and extroversion can all be expected. (Seventh Ave. at 57th St. 212-247-7800. March 23.)

The Pop Group

After a thirty-five-year recording hiatus, this politically minded band from Bristol, England, recently released a trenchant new record called "Citizen Zombie." Formed in 1977, during the onset of British post-punk, and like their better-known contemporaries in Gang of Four, the Pop Group was influenced by reggae and funk, as well as by situationism and anti-capitalism. The band's sound arguably went farther than that of their peers in mixing punk and black musical styles; during their early years, they collaborated with members of the proto-hip-hop collective Last Poets and with the dub producer Dennis Bovell. In 2010, several of the band's original members, including the singer and lyricist Mark Stewart, reunited to play a few concerts. Soon afterward, they began working on material for the new album, which contains catchy pop moments and lush keyboards but remains dominated by incisive agitprop, astringent guitar parts, and danceable bass grooves. (March 16: Rough Trade NYC, 64 N. 9th St., Brooklyn. roughtradenyc.com. March 17: Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. 212-260-4700.)

The Rooks

This indie-soul sextet, formed at Wesleyan University a few years ago, is young and in a hurry, but not in the conventional way: it often opts for patient, seductive grooves. The act has been playing to packed crowds at small venues like Pianos and Arlene's Grocery, and on March 21 it hits Mercury Lounge with material from its forthcoming second EP, "Wires." To judge from the single that the group released, "Secrets," it promises more slow-burning, funky jams that hit all the right spots. (217 E. Houston St. 212-260-4700. March 21.)

Kate Tempest

This twenty-nine-year-old from southeast London, who was born Kate Calvert, is a playwright, a poet, and a rapper. Two years ago, she became the youngest poet to win Britain's Ted Hughes Award, which celebrates innovation in the form, for her epic "Brand New Ancients," which she has performed live, backed by strings. Her work is far from genteel, though, and as a rapper she approaches the peak of her art, passionately spinning detailed stories about everyday people with a no-nonsense delivery that endears her to hardcore rap fans and English professors alike. She's on her first musical tour of North America, with stops in Manhattan and Brooklyn, accompanied by the U.K. artist **Jack Garratt**, a one-man electronic R. & B. machine. (March 24: Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. 212-260-4700. March 25: Rough Trade NYC, 64 N. 9th St., Brooklyn. roughtradenyc.com.)

A Winged Victory for the Sullen

Even for the most open-minded listener, ambient music can be a tough sell, which is understandable: it's difficult to form an emotional link with

non-narrative music that can easily fade into the background, unless it's created by particularly thoughtful composers. Adam Wiltzie (of Stars of the Lid) and the pianist Dustin O'Halloran have spent the past few years perfecting their minimal, post-classical mood music. Utilizing mostly acoustic instruments, the duo often records in cavernous spaces, giving room to each note and tone, allowing for ample reverberation. Their second album, the recently released "Atomos," is an eleven-song meditation commissioned by the choreographer Wayne McGregor. When they appear at the subterranean performance space Le Poisson Rouge, you'd do well to grab a table near the front, remove your shoes, and let the sound wash over you in therapeutic waves. (158 Bleecker St. 212-505-3474. March 24.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Bill Frisell and Thomas Morgan

Frisell is a guitarist whose minimalist aesthetic colors each carefully chosen note he plays, and he can coat a room in mysterious yet strangely warming tones. At the Village Vanguard this week, he's joined by a sympathetic partner, the bassist Morgan, a familiar figure from recent Frisell ensembles, in a duo format that harks back to Frisell's very first recording as a leader, "In Line," from 1983. (178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037. March 17-22.)

Guy Klucevsek

The accordion takes on undreamed-of dimensions in the hands of this virtuosic player and audacious composer. Klucevsek has long collaborated with musical denizens of the downtown scene; at the Stone this week, in addition to a solo performance that will be a compact retrospective of his compositional work of the past thirty years, he will be joined by a host of adventurous players, including his fellow-accordionists **Art Bailey** and **Nathan Koci**, who, with Klucevsek, form the squeezebox supergroup AAATT (All Accordions All the Time). (Avenue C at 2nd St. thestonenyc.com. March 17-22.)

Lee Konitz and Dave Douglas Quintet

At a Charlie Haden tribute concert in January, the eighty-seven-year-old alto saxophonist Konitz played (and sang) a blues of such purity and unforced expression that Town Hall shook. He will undoubtedly bring that same musical wisdom to the quintet he co-leads with the inventive trumpeter Douglas, a younger admirer inspired by Konitz's artistry. This tantalizing ad-hoc unit includes the bassist **Linda Oh**, the pianist **Matt Mitchell**, and the drummer **Ches Smith**. (Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. 212-576-2232. March 19-22.)

Microscopic Septet

Now that Phillip Johnston, the soprano saxophonist and co-leader (with the pianist Joel Forrester) of this long-established, unclassifiable ensemble,

resides in Australia, the beloved Micros convene only rarely. Nevertheless, the sterling musicianship and the antic verve of this saxophone-heavy band remain intact, as exhibited in its bustling performances and on its most recent recording, "Manhattan Moonrise." (Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. 212-252-5091. March 19.)

Ben Vereen

The multi-talented actor, singer, and dancer perfected his craft with such masters as Bob Fosse, with whom he worked in "Sweet Charity," "Pippin," and the film "All That Jazz." A Tony Award winner, Vereen is old school in the best sense; he's out to give it his all, and won't leave the stage until he's done so. (54 Below, 254 W. 54th St. 646-476-3551. March 17-22.)

Miguel Zenón Quartet

The celebrated saxophonist's latest album, "Identities Are Changeable," which focusses on the Puerto Rican-American experience, weaves spoken commentary throughout the dense fabric of music. A special related show at the Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture, in the Bronx, features video footage by David Dempewolf, creating an immersive performance. The additional players who flesh out the album's arrangements will not be on hand, so Zenón will rely on his longtime quartet, which includes the pianist **Luis Perdomo**. (Hostos Community College, 450 Grand Concourse. 718-518-4455. March 20.)

ABOVE & BEYOND

Macaron Day

Like an Easter-egg hunt, Macaron Day, on the first day of spring, is an occasion for collecting colorful surprises. While painted eggs are pretty, they're still eggs; macarons, those photogenic French sandwich cookies in pastel hues, are far tastier. Chic macaron shops have been popping up around the city like daffodils, and this event gives you a chance to try some of their products for free. Macaron Day also raises money for charity: the sixteen participating pâtisseries (in twenty-eight locations) are donating a share of the day's proceeds to City Harvest, the food-rescue organization. (For more information, visit macarondaynyc.com. March 20.)

"Eggs on End"

According to Donna Henes, who calls herself an urban shaman and goes by the name Mama Donna, the Chinese balance an egg on its end at the start of spring to bring good luck. This is, Henes says, "a way for urban folks to connect directly, viscerally, with a cosmic force of nature." For forty years, Henes has been performing the ritual around New York on the equinox. This year, she's transforming Brooklyn's Grand Army Plaza into a sacred ritual space. Each attendee gets an egg, and after a countdown to the exact moment of the equinox, 6:48 P.M., the egg balancing begins. The celebration concludes with music by Batala NYC, an all-women Afro-Brazilian drum band. (March 20, starting at 6:15. For more information, visit donnahenes.net.)

"Paradise Interrupted"

The Metropolitan Museum of Art often presents concerts at the Temple of Dendur, an Egyptian relic dating from around 15 B.C. On March 21, it is the site of a special preview of "Paradise Interrupted," the first opera by the artist Jennifer Wen Ma, the designer responsible for the visual and special effects at the opening and closing ceremonies for the Beijing Olympics, in 2008. The opera draws from the story of the Garden of Eden and from the Ming-dynasty Chinese play "The Peony Pavilion," and features a score by the composer Huang Ruo, who weaves traditional Chinese music together with Western themes. The acclaimed Chinese opera singer Qian Yi has the lead role. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-535-7710. March 21 at 3 and 7.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

The flood of Asian art continues. At **Christie's**, the week is dominated by works from the collections of the late dealer and scholar Robert Hatfield Ellsworth, a.k.a. the King of Ming (March 17-21). The items, which include Chinese bronzes, jade ornaments, and painted scrolls, as well as a pantheon of Himalayan goddesses, will be rolled out in the course of five sales (plus two online), culminating with a selection of Ellsworth's art books. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) • **Sotheby's** fast-forwards to the twentieth century for its sale of modern and contemporary works from Southeast Asia (March 18), with an emphasis on Indian modernists, such as Francis Newton Souza, Vasudeo Gaitonde, and Maqbool Fida Husain. One of the top lots is an almost Modigliani-like self-portrait by Amrita Sher-Gil, a painter of Indian and Hungarian heritage

and one of the few women represented in the sale. The final two auctions (March 19 and March 21) are devoted to Chinese art, from calligraphic scrolls and landscapes to bronzes and snuff bottles. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

READINGS AND TALKS

César Aira

The Argentinean writer is making his first New York City appearances. On March 18 at 7:30, he talks with the novelist and journalist Hari Kunzru, at Greenlight Bookstore. (686 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-246-0200.) On March 23 at 7, he gives a presentation in Spanish with the writers Mónica de la Torre and Sergio Chejfec, at the Instituto Cervantes. (211 E. 49th St. 212-308-7720.) On March 24 at 7, he's at McNally Jackson Books, in the company of Rivka Galchen. (52 Prince St. 212-274-1160.)

"Seeing Home from a Distance"

Cave Canem, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting poetry by African-American writers, presents Dante Micheaux, Darryl Pinckney, and Tiphonie Yanique, in a discussion about the role of place in James Baldwin's writing, as a part of New York City's "Year of James Baldwin." (The New School, Wollman Hall, 66 W. 12th St. March 19 at 6:30. cavecanempoeats.org.)

Word Brooklyn

The poet, playwright, and rapper Kate Tempest (see Night Life) delivers a spoken-word performance to mark the U.S. publication of her works "Brand New Ancients" and "Hold Your Own." (126 Franklin St. 718-383-0096. March 26 at 7.)



TABLES FOR TWO

THE POLO BAR

1 E. 55th St. (212-207-8562)

RALPH LAUREN'S POLO BAR is misleadingly named, considering that it comprises a full kitchen and dining room, below the lavish, eponymous bar; but to call it a restaurant isn't quite right, either. It's more like a club, with an elusive membership structure: to get on the list for dinner after five-fifteen or before nine-thirty, you simply have to be somebody—Matthew Broderick, for example, who went nearly unnoticed, one evening, in the shadow of Rihanna and Naomi Campbell, paparazzi hot on their trail. In the opening monologue of “Annie Hall,” Woody Allen used the Groucho Marx line “I would never want to belong to any club that would have someone like me for a member,” but, nearly forty years later, he looked right at home as he made his exit, hand in hand with his wife. For the average Joe who snags an off-hours reservation by calling a month in advance, the Polo Bar is like Disneyland for celebrity gawkers, the sort of place where “Should I get a baked potato?” is easily misheard as “Is that Channing Tatum?”

The Polo Bar is like Disneyland for horse enthusiasts, too—and an answer to the question of what you get when you beat a dead one with a polo stick. There are paintings and photographs of the animal and its most patrician sport everywhere you turn, as well as artfully hung saddles, helmets, and crops; even the cocktail stirrers look like miniature mallets. The live-like-a-blue-blood siren song of the Lauren brand vibrates extra loudly here, where the service achieves butler-level attentiveness (“Pardon me, my lady”) and the hand-stitched leather banquettes are lined with plush throw pillows in the same custom plaid as the baby-doll dresses worn by the smiling hostesses.

The menu consists mostly of straightforward, clubby classics: a perfect iceberg wedge; chicken paillard topped with grilled endive and meaty roasted hen-of-the-woods mushrooms; a salty, satisfying bacon cheeseburger with the platonic ideal of French fries, spilling out of a sterling-silver cup. In a nod, perhaps, to Lauren's previous life as Lifshitz (the name he was born with, in the Bronx), the corned beef on marble rye is designated as “Ralph's”—but we're also told that he favors the Ranch House Chili, and one can only imagine which of his private chefs, on which of his ranches, came up with the recipe. For dessert, there's a fudgy brownie, topped with a scoop of vanilla and warm chocolate sauce, or Ralph's coffee ice cream with dark-chocolate shortbread cookies. It feels good to live like the one per cent. By the coat check on a recent night, a group of besuited middle-aged men appraised a large oil painting. “Reminds me of my polo days,” one said. “In Brooklyn.” He looked wistful. “No, but, seriously, have you ever played polo?”

—Hannah Goldfield

Open daily for dinner. Entrées \$22-\$55.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC HELGAS



FOOD & DRINK

BAR TAB SOJU HAUS

315 Fifth Ave. (212-213-2177)

Soju, which translates as “burned liquor,” seared itself into the Korean consciousness when the Mongols paired their thirteenth-century invasion of the peninsula with a welcome import (and an evident consolation): an efficient technique for distilling what has become the best-selling booze on the planet. Eight hundred years and billions of bottles later, soju, with its myriad fruit- and vegetable-infused incarnations, flummoxed a duo who appeared to be the only English-speaking patrons at this mellow, unmarked lounge, a few flights up from a ginseng outlet in Koreatown. “Can I order the poktanju?” a sandy-haired woman asked anxiously. Most of the uniformly Asian crowd would not have had trouble telling the drinks apart from the suggested drinking method: poktanju is a beloved manner of sinking shot-glass “dominoes” into beer glasses. Late on a Thursday, a couple nuzzled into a coconut shell, presumably not having one of the “serious conversations” that the menu suggests is a natural consequence of soju consumption. Nearby, two friends from opposite sides of the strait veered from a calm consideration of the house drink—“Is soju the Korean sake?”—to a heated contemplation of imperialism. A brawny waiter, bearing a kettle of quenching corn tea, doused the dispute: yes, soju and sake are both traditionally made from rice, “but much better to think of sake as the Japanese soju.”

—Jiayang Fan

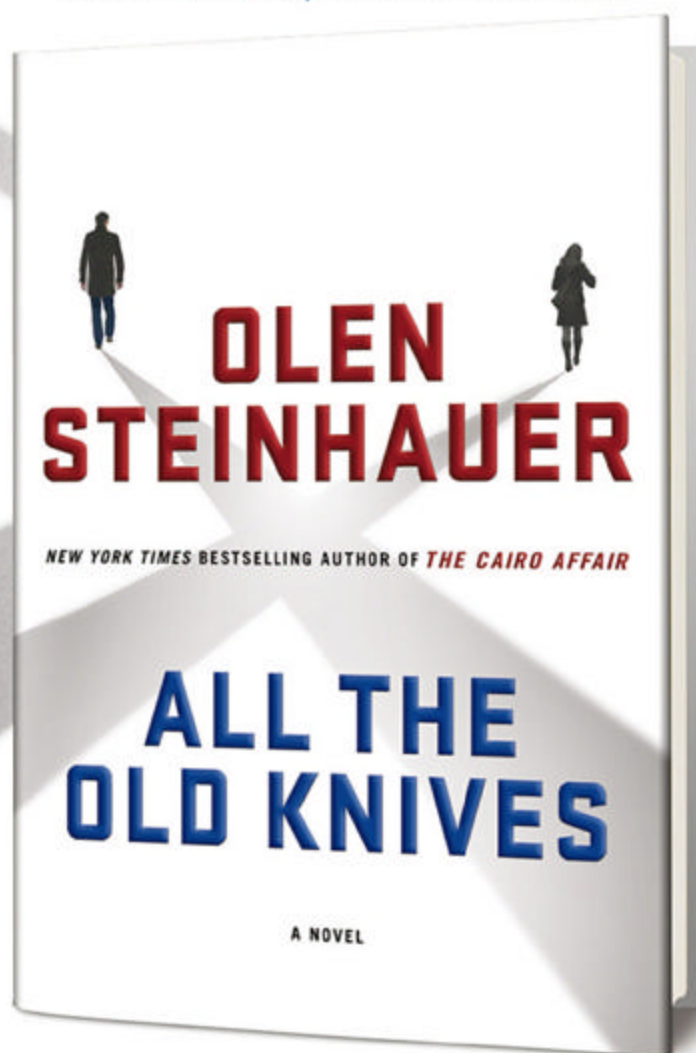


THE NEW YORKER, MARCH 23, 2015

33

"A heart-racing espionage plot...Mr. Steinhauer specializes in tough showdowns. And the more innocently they begin, the more devastatingly they end."

—JANET MASLIN, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*



SOMETIMES INTIMACY CAN BE THE GREATEST WEAPON OF ALL

Two ex-lovers meet for dinner. One a former spy, the other still mired in the shadowy world. As they relive their memories of a hijacking, their motive remains obscured: is it to reignite a lost romance or survive the night?

Both also available as e-books.



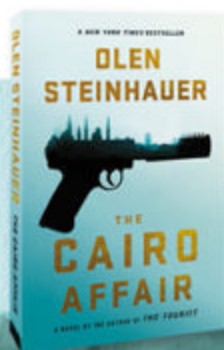
MINOTAUR BOOKS

ST. MARTIN'S PUBLISHING GROUP

  OlenSteinhauer.com

**THE *NEW YORK TIMES*
BESTSELLER NOW AVAILABLE
IN PAPERBACK**

PICADOR



"Betrayals, double-crosses, hidden agendas, moral conflicts, international relations, and even a delectable double-entendre of a title."

—Chris Pavone



THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT TODAY'S WOMAN

Early last week, while the political world was waiting for Hillary Clinton to address the moral, diplomatic, and technological questions posed by her e-mail habits, the United Nations issued a report asserting that more than one in three women experience sexual or physical violence in their lifetimes. One in ten females under the age of twenty is subjected to “forced sexual acts.” In more than thirty countries, it is not illegal for men to beat their wives. In the United States, eighty-three per cent of girls between twelve and sixteen confront sexual harassment in school. Even the earnest bureaucrats of the U.N., who tend to favor euphemism and skip over cruelties like honor killings and “corrective rape,” could not help but label the rate and the variety of mayhem regularly exacted upon half of humankind as “alarmingly high.”

The report went on to say that female political representation, while creeping higher, is still depressingly low—not least in the world’s oldest constitutional democracy, the United States. The parliaments of South Africa, Ecuador, Finland, Senegal, Sweden, Cuba, Belgium, and Rwanda are all more than forty per cent female. The percentage of members in the U.S. House of Representatives who are women is eighteen. And, since it will soon be political high season on cable TV and at the town halls and diners of Iowa and New Hampshire, it bears repeating that no woman has ever been the President of the United States.

It was hard not to think of this status report on the condition of women in the twenty-first century while Hillary Clinton stepped into the lights before an agitated crowd of reporters at the U.N. last Tuesday. A large tapestry of “Guernica” hung behind her, and she looked no happier in that setting than the tormented figures in Picasso’s image of civil war. And yet contrition was not in her plans. Instead, she chose a familiar course, offering explanations that were by turns petulant and pretzelled. Asked about

the way she chose to deal with federal guidelines on e-mail when she was the Secretary of State, she said, “I opted for convenience.” Clinton’s further explanations were so familiar, such a ride in the Wayback Machine, that you had to wonder, Why do I suddenly feel twenty years younger yet thoroughly exhausted?

The U.N. Secretary-General’s report is a progress report on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which grew out of the 1995 World Conference on Women. At that conference, Clinton, as First Lady, gave an unsparing assessment of so many of the grimmer aspects of the female condition: political exclusion, discrimination, rape as a weapon of war, genital cutting, forced illiteracy, forced abortion and sterilization. She performed in a way that suggested both conviction and political talent independent of her role as the President’s wife and counsellor. The speech was as eloquent in its way as Barack Obama’s “race speech,” in the 2008 campaign, not because of its radical originality—like Obama’s, it was rooted in decades of progressive thought—but because of its potential to affect policy and mainstream opinion.

“It is no longer acceptable to discuss women’s rights as separate from human rights” was a message she delivered with clarity, particulars, and force.

This was one reason that the press conference last week—given, presumably, as Clinton was preparing to announce a run for the Presidency, in 2016—was so dispiriting. At that moment at the U.N., she should have been returning to those feminist themes, but she used the opportunity to claim that she was only trying to protect the sanctity of her communications about her “yoga routines,” her daughter’s wedding, and her mother’s funeral. This was a notably transparent exploitation of gender. It’s one thing for a politician to be stupid; it is quite another for her to assume that we are. And what to make of a politician who protested the



war in Vietnam and investigated the Watergate scandals but now writes a valentine to Henry Kissinger in the *Washington Post*—a book review in which Clinton calls Kissinger “surprisingly idealistic”? The peoples of Chile, Cambodia, Argentina, Bangladesh, and East Timor surely want to know more.

As the Clinton campaign machinery creaks into motion, voters, too, will want to know more. For one thing, who will compete with her? The likeliest Republican candidates do not exactly stride the earth as political colossi. Governor Scott Walker, of Wisconsin, is fast accumulating pots of right-wing money, but that is no guarantee that he can emerge from the ideological margins. Jeb Bush only recently secured his mother’s blessing to run and cannot hope to inspire a frenzy of support with the proposition that he is somewhat brighter than his retired older brother.

It is the job of the press to put pressure on power and on pretenders to power. Even in a solo primary race, reporters will scrutinize not only Hillary Clinton’s record but also her hawkish foreign-policy impulses, the dealings of the Clinton Global Initiative, and the contradiction between the need to ease the inequality gap and the candidate’s tropism toward big money. But, in the absence of a Democratic challenger, the pressure will never be what it ought to be.

The 2008 Democratic race was not just good sport; it also made both Obama and Clinton better. In the contest for the White House, the stakes are plain and enormous: the rights of women; the fate of the earth; the gaping disparities of income and opportunity; the stability of the Middle East, South Asia, and Europe. However vexed by the politics of gender, America is ready for a woman President. Long past ready. A female President committed to the kind of vision Clinton set out twenty years ago in Beijing could exert a powerful influence on the lives of women all over the world. But if, in the end, Hillary Clinton’s only competition is herself, if all she has to contend with is the press and her less attractive instincts, she will have gained a too easy path to power at the cost of being less prepared to exercise it.

There are twenty months left before Election Day, 2016. Bush v. Clinton, the likeliest race (though don’t count on it), promises endless discussion of families who are as familiar to us as the Simpsons. But where are the other candidates? What is behind the national impoverishment of political talent? Isn’t there a chance that the greatest nostalgia we might feel, come primary season, is not for earlier iterations of the Clintons and the Bushes but for the President who has not yet finished his time in office?

—David Remnick

IN THE RING FOREVER YOUNG



People love Hulk Hogan. It’s just fun to think about him, and his long pro-wrestling career, and his red head scarf, and his huge size, and the way he points his forefinger and shouts “You!” at opponents to intimidate them. The fans crowding into the Garden for “Hulk Hogan Appreciation Night” on a recent Friday were doing that a lot—saying “You!” and pointing. No other passion in the city draws a crowd as diverse as pro wrestling’s. It makes the patrons of MOMA look like close relatives of one another by comparison. Latinos, Asians, white people, blacks, little kids, old ladies with their hair in buns, women in hijabs, dads with sons, office pals in sober suits, and eager young date-night couples poured in, quickly scoped out the gift kiosks, and whooped up the ramps and escalators to their seats. If you were searching among them for a unifying feature, besides the red head scarves, you would have to settle for this: facial hair. Across ethnic and

racial lines, many of the guys sported neat beard-mustache combos of the Ming the Merciless variety.

Hands of all kinds went over hearts for the national anthem. Then the wrestling began, each match more slam-bang and scream-worthy than the last. A deeply hateable wrestler named Bad News Barrett came out, commandeered the microphone, and offered some comments in a sneering English accent—something about an American wrestler named Dean Ambrose having stolen his Intercontinental Championship Belt. The bell rang and Barrett had to do battle, then and there, with the aforementioned Ambrose, plus Dolph Ziggler, who together would’ve stood a better chance if they’d made common cause instead of turning on each other whenever they had the Englishman down.

Evil was rewarded, as often occurs. Barrett won and skedaddled up the aisle with the coveted belt, to cascading boos. Similarly, in a later match, a black-bearded giant named Rusev, “currently residing in Moscow,” according to the announcer, beat mercilessly on a clean-cut American hero, John Cena, whose thing is that he salutes all the time. The image of Vladimir Putin flashed regularly from the Jumbotron to encourage Rusev, who cheatingly put two succes-

sive referees out of commission and paused now and then to wave a large Russian flag. In Section 117, Row 20, Seat 5, a man named Darren Quick said to his son, “Watch—Rusev is going to win in two minutes.” When, exactly two minutes later, Rusev did pin Cena to the mat, the boy asked his father how he had known. “Because it’s what I do, it’s my job,” Quick said. Throughout the evening, he made predictions that were always right.

Intermission, but still no Hulk Hogan. “We want Ho-gan! We want Ho-gan!” the crowd chanted, after returning from the long bathroom lines. An oiled and tattooed wrestler named Randy Orton, “the Apex Predator,” won a match against a beard-and-hat opponent who resembled one of the guys from ZZ Top. Then, finally—Hogan time! Officials of different ilks and stripes appeared in the ring and made introductory speeches. Spotlights hit a far entry, and Hulk Hogan stepped through it into roars of devotion. He wore dark glasses with bright-yellow frames above his drooping yellow mustache, and a sleeveless red body shirt. Everything about him was red or yellow. He walked in spotlights up the aisle and climbed through the ropes as if opening his front door.

Then there were hugs between him

and Ric (Nature Boy) Flair, a former nemesis (now devoted friend), and the presentation to Hogan of a nearly life-size photo of himself, and the pronouncement by someone that Hulk Hogan was the Garden's greatest star of all time, and the elevation of a Hulk Hogan banner into the rafters next to the retired jersey numbers of Knicks and Rangers stars. A short, sometimes slow-motion film played on the Garden screen: Hulk Hogan whaling the tar out of opponents, to the music of Bob Dylan's "Forever Young." The crowd chanted, over and over, "Thank you, Ho-gan! Thank you, Ho-gan!" Then the screen showed the honoree live, his bright-blue eyes filled with tears and a transcendent expression on his steroid-ravaged face.

When people stood up to go, a spectator in Section 117, Row 19, Seat 5, directly below Darren Quick, repeated the question Quick's son had asked: How had he known? "I'm an independent pro wrestler," Quick replied. "I've wrestled since I was fourteen, and I'm now thirty-three. I go to a lot of tryouts, hoping to break in to a big-time event like this. My wrestling name is DVS, pronounced Devious. From my experience, I can usually tell what the script has to be for a match. In my (I guess you could say) 'real' job, I'm a security guard. I start my shift in a building in midtown in fifty-five minutes, at midnight."

—Ian Frazier

LAST CALL FILLING THE HOLE



At P. J. Clarke's, the Third Avenue saloon that has bestowed its gaslit consolations since 1884, Matthew Weiner ordered the chicken paillard, then laughed. "I've never had anything but chicken here," he said. "And my last drink of the night." Weiner frequented Clarke's when he wrote for "The Sopranos." As the creator of "Mad Men"—whose final, seven-episode run begins next month on AMC—he brought the cast there after shooting the pilot, for a bittersweet celebration. They doubted

the show would make it to air. Weiner, a watchful yet voluble man in a gray suit jacket, blue vest, and tailored jeans, confided, "Jim Croce's 'New York's Not My Home' played that night on the jukebox, and I felt like, 'I can fake it, but I'm a bumpkin here.'"

"Mad Men," of course, now stands as the definitive portrait of New York in the sixties, a giddy carousel of assignments and Martinis that becomes a manic yet melancholy whirligig of assassinations and divorces. (Along the way, Pete and Peggy go to Clarke's and she does the twist.) Weiner, who grew up in Baltimore and Los Angeles, but who has studied Manhattan's folkways more carefully than Jane Jacobs, said, "My childhood, 1975, was the year the city nearly went bankrupt. So the show anticipates that—starting around 1963, it gets louder and louder, cruder and cruder, more and more jackhammers and crime and strife, the brownstones getting torn down and turned into co-ops, the coldness of capitalism. The office on Lexington where we filmed the pilot was gutted within months"—he broke off with a laugh. "All this stuff makes me sound old!" He's forty-nine; his son Marten, who played the neighbor boy, Glen, is now a college freshman.

The waitress, motherly but no-nonsense, eyed Weiner's barely nibbled meal: "How are you doing there?"

"Fantastic!" he reassured her. Then he remarked that viewers, too, resist change. "At the end of Season 3, when Don gets kicked out of the house and Betty is on the airplane with her lover and her baby to go to Reno, the audience was asking, 'Are they getting divorced?'—it's like, 'How much clearer could I be?' And people said a lot of things about Megan, and I realized, a year later, Oh, it's not about *her*—they just wanted Don to go back to Betty. We're all childlike when it comes to entertainment."

So what was the show really about, in retrospect? Weiner threw up his hands: "I could never sum anything up, but . . . human privacy and loneliness and distance, and trying to overcome that with love? Most successful, powerful people have the problem Don has—they give us a lot, because they want to win us over, but they never fill the hole."

He looked up. "What do you think it's about?"

Bad parenting. "Oh," he said, crestfallen. "No. No. That certainly wasn't the focus." He frowned. "Pete and Trudy are trying to be good parents. Are Don and Betty bad parents? I don't think Betty should have had kids, but I think Don is actually a pretty good dad, if you allow for his generation. That was a comment I'd get a lot—Don reminds me of my dad. I never know what he's thinking."

"Still picking, dear?" the waitress



Matthew Weiner

asked, and Weiner put a protective hand over the flattened chicken. He went on, "Look, there is definitely some bad parenting in the show, but there's no *drama* in good parenting. And plenty of the bad-parenting moments didn't come from me. You hear the stories in the writers' room—they laugh when they tell them—and you realize, Oh, you became a writer because you told a joke when you were five and everybody stopped hitting you."

He talked about other matters for a while, the clamor thinning as the regulars began to depart. Then he said, "I'm always going to be defensive when I hear the word 'bad.' Also, I've talked a lot about how the show is autobiographical, but I did not have the same childhood as Don Draper, thank God." A busboy reached for Weiner's plate. "No, I'm still eating," he declared, not eating.

"Here's the glimmers of my childhood," he said. "When Grandma Pauline babysits Sally and says she's going to send her to bed without any dinner,

and 'You'll watch the sunset from your bedroom window. It's the saddest thing in the world.' I was punished a lot as a child, and I remember being in trouble, in the summer, and looking out my window and seeing all the other kids running around . . ." He laughed softly, and when the waitress came by again he smiled up at her. "Yes, I'm done now. Thank you."

—*Tad Friend*

ONE MAN'S TRASH COIN DROP



One of the best days of the year for finding coins on the sidewalks of New York, according to Roger Pasquier, is March 18th, right after St. Patrick's Day. In general, the best time is early morning, and the best weather is chilly: cold enough so that people have to wear gloves, but not so cold that they stay inside. Sundays are good; Mondays are bad. The west side of a southbound street is good because that's where buses stop and people fumble with wallets as they get on. Snow is an impediment, at least until it melts. Then it can be helpful.

Pasquier, who is sixty-seven, is an ornithologist, who retired from the National Audubon Society in 2012. He spends every day of birding season in Central Park. But he is also an elite money hunter. He started out casually picking up coins, bills, and dropped MetroCards. "But then I said, Be scientific, keep track of this." From 1987, when he began recording his findings, through 2014, he retrieved a thousand nine hundred and twenty dollars and eighty-seven cents. From 1987 to 2006, he averaged about fifty-eight dollars a year. Then Apple introduced the iPhone, and millions of potential competitors started to stare at their screens rather than at the sidewalks. Since 2007, Pasquier has averaged just over ninety-five dollars a year.

One Monday morning, Pasquier, who is compact and wiry, headed south from his apartment, on East Sixty-eighth Street, and explained the hazards of his craft. Good spirits, he said, are a liability. When you're happy, you tend to look up, not down. "It takes a lot of will power to focus when you're in a cheerful mood," he said. On Second Avenue, between Sixty-second and Sixty-third, he dashed into the street, reached down, and grabbed a quarter.

Which brought him to the second hazard of his hobby: oncoming cars.

The best place to find coins is in the gutter of the street, where few people walk and there aren't as many distractions, such as bottle caps or the circular stains of ground-in chewing gum. Pasquier tends to avoid eye contact with other pedestrians: "It's important that I keep my eyes on where the money is."

He maneuvered through crowds like a speed skater. His strategy comes from his main passion. Birds rely on a "search image," he explained. "They have a general sense of what their food or predator looks like and they become very attuned to those shapes." A chickadee knows to dart the moment it senses the shadow of a hawk. Pasquier can find a coin by its shine or its shape, or by the sound it makes when dropped. Asked if he believes that picking up a penny brings you good luck, he said, "The penny is the luck."

At Fifty-fifth Street and Second Avenue, Pasquier noticed a glint in the street and stepped out to retrieve a penny. It hadn't been a bad day so far—twenty-six cents in thirteen blocks.

His greatest find, he said, occurred in 1995, in Grand Central Terminal. He spied the faint outline of a tightly folded bill; from a distance, he couldn't tell if it was a one or a twenty. He approached discreetly. Then, he said, "like a heron spearing a fish, I jabbed out my arm." Outside, he unfolded the bill and saw the face of Benjamin Franklin. First, he felt excited, then he got worried: perhaps the money belonged to a child heading out on his first trip alone? A friend made him feel better by suggesting that the bill had been dropped by a drug dealer.

South of Thirty-fourth Street, he cut over to Third Avenue, noting the number of bars there. (Alcohol is the ally of a coin hunter.) Then came a string of pennies, one of which had been run over so many times that the back looked like a dime. Another was bent like a taco. Money was hard to come by in SoHo. Near the entrance to the Staten Island Ferry, Pasquier stopped to tally his earnings: thirty-two cents. Then he looked down at his right foot. Behind it, shining in the sun, was a bright copper penny. "It just shows how easy it is to miss things," he said, reaching down.

—*Nicholas Thompson*



"I can tell you're just hate-agreeing with me."

A white dress shirt with a colorful patterned tie. The tie features a complex geometric pattern in shades of blue, red, and yellow. The shirt is laid flat, showing the collar and the top of the front placket. The cuff on the right sleeve is visible, showing the 'PFS' logo.

SPECIAL
INTRODUCTORY
PRICE **\$19.95**

reg. \$69.50-\$74.50

our best selling dress shirt
the pinpoint oxford

- white 100% cotton
- 6 collar styles
- button or french cuffs
- regular, big & tall or trim
- 14½" x 32" to 20" x 37"
- **FREE monogramming**
(reg. \$10.95)
- **Add this silk tie for**
just \$19.95
(reg. \$62.50)

Paul Fredrick

paulfredrick.com/try
800-309-6000

Specify promotional code **TWRSNY**

FREE EXCHANGES. New customer offer. Limit 4 shirts per customer. Shipping charges extra.
Cannot be combined with other offers. Expires 4/30/15.

THE FINANCIAL PAGE IN PRAISE OF SHORT SELLERS

In November, 2013, Whitney Tilson, who runs a small hedge fund called Kase Capital Management, gave a presentation to a group of money managers. Tilson's talk was about a flooring company called Lumber Liquidators. In the previous two years, its profits had more than doubled and its stock had risen sevenfold. But Tilson made a case for selling the company short—betting on its stock to fall. He thought that its profit margins were unsustainably high and suspected that it had driven down costs by buying wood illegally harvested in Siberia. (The company denies buying illegally logged wood but says that it may face criminal charges relating to this issue.) Months later, a whistle-blower contacted him. "He said the story was much bigger than the sourcing of illegal hardwood," Tilson told me. The contact alleged that the company was saving money by buying laminates made of wood soaked in formaldehyde (a carcinogen) from Chinese factories, and that the resins these factories used also contained the substance. Tilson hired a lab to test the laminates, and it found formaldehyde levels two to seven times the limit established as safe by California, on which forthcoming federal standards are based. A small investor named Xuhua Zhou had already published a detailed report alleging similar problems.

Shorting Lumber Liquidators turned out to be a good call. On March 1st, "60 Minutes" aired a blistering exposé on the company. The segment included tests showing high formaldehyde levels and hidden-camera interviews in which workers in China admitted lying about quality. The next day, Lumber Liquidators' stock fell twenty-five per cent. It then recovered a bit as the company mounted a P.R. offensive—insisting that its products were safe and that "60 Minutes" had used "improper" testing procedures. But the stock is still down more than forty per cent in the past three weeks.

Short selling—borrowing an asset in order to sell it, in the hope of buying it back after the price has fallen—has been a part of markets at least since the seventeenth century. But Lumber Liquidators' tumble is the result of something new: the rise of the activist short. Traditionally, shorting has been seen as unsavory, even corrupt. Many people blamed it for the Great Crash of 1929, and the practice is illegal in some countries. During the financial crisis of 2008, many countries, including the U.S., banned the short selling of financial stocks. Regulators have generally been skeptical of shorts. When the hedge-fund manager Bill Ackman shorted the mortgage insurer MBIA, alleging accounting problems, he was investigated by the New York State Attorney General's office. Short sellers, not surprisingly, tended to keep their heads down.

But in recent years they have been going public. In 2011 and 2012, a small short-selling firm called Muddy Waters made a name for itself by exposing fraud at a series of Chinese companies that were listed on North American exchanges. Last summer, a short-selling outfit called Gotham City Research published a report excoriating the financial accounting of Gowex, a Spanish telecom company. Within days, the company's C.E.O. had resigned and Gowex had filed for bankruptcy. Battles between shorts and the companies they attack have even become front-page news, as with Ackman's billion-dollar bet (so far unsuccessful) against Herbalife.

Many investors are unhappy about activist shorts and argue that they have an incentive to drive down a company's stock price with false allegations and then cash out at the bottom—a practice known as "short and distort." This is Lumber Liquidators' current defense: it says that it is the victim of "a small group of short-selling investors who are working together." Shorting and distorting does happen, and is illegal. But the rise of activist shorts has been, on the whole, a good thing.

All kinds of forces conspire to push stocks higher: investor overconfidence, corporate puffery, and Wall Street's inherent bullish bias. Shorting helps counterbalance this, and it contributes to the diversity of opinion that healthy markets require. In 2007, a comprehensive study of markets around the world found that ones where short selling was legal and common were more efficient than ones where it was not. And a 2012 study concluded simply, "Stock prices are more accurate when short sellers are more active."

Short sellers can also play a vital role in uncovering malfeasance. Stock exchanges do almost no vetting of companies, as long as they meet financial requirements. Wall Street analysts run the risk of alienating

clients if they're too bearish. And regulators don't have the resources to look closely at thousands of companies. In that environment, short sellers—precisely because they get rich from bad news—help keep the market honest. The most famous example is the Enron scandal: it was a short seller, James Chanos, who suggested that the emperor had no clothes. A recent study of markets in thirty-three countries concluded that shorting helps "discipline" executives and reduces the likelihood of earnings manipulation.

Of course, short sellers are often wrong, and that may yet prove to be the case with Lumber Liquidators. But the fact that the company's response to the charges was to attack short sellers should give investors pause. In a 2004 study, Owen Lamont, a business-school professor, looked at more than two hundred and fifty companies that had gone after short sellers—filing lawsuits, calling for S.E.C. investigations, and so on. Their long-term performance was dismal: over three years, their average stock-market return was negative forty-two per cent. That suggests that, if you react to bad news by shooting the messenger, it may be because you know the message is true.

—James Surowiecki





An IRA should age like
a fine wine. But without
all that complexity.

Your uncomplicated IRA

Open a new IRA in just 15 minutes. Get step-by-step assistance from our retirement consultants too. It's a rich bouquet of hassle-free, with delicate notes of simple.

Open an IRA and get up to \$600.

Call [877-tdameritrade](tel:877-tdameritrade) or go to tdameritrade.com



All investments involve risk, and successful results are not guaranteed. **Offer valid through 4/30/2015. Funding of \$25,000–\$99,999 receives \$100; funding of \$100,000–\$249,999 receives \$300; and funding of \$250,000 or more receives \$600.** Cash bonus subject to twelve-month funding-duration condition. See website for details and other restrictions/conditions. This is not an offer or solicitation in any jurisdiction where we are not authorized to do business. TD Ameritrade, Inc., member FINRA/SIPC. TD Ameritrade is a trademark jointly owned by TD Ameritrade IP Company, Inc. and The Toronto-Dominion Bank. © 2015 TD Ameritrade IP Company, Inc. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

SOLE CYCLE

The homely Birkenstock gets a fashion makeover.

BY REBECCA MEAD

In 1936, Meret Oppenheim, the Swiss Surrealist artist, had tea with Pablo Picasso at the Café de Flore, in Paris. Oppenheim was wearing a bracelet, of her own design, that was clad in ocelot fur. Picasso admired it, noting that one could cover anything with fur. Soon afterward, Oppenheim produced her most famous work: a teacup, saucer, and spoon covered with the creamy-

zona sandal—the classic, two-strap style long favored by hippies and German tourists. The sandal had the familiar chunky cork base and thick, buckled straps in dull brown-gray suède, but the insole and the straps were lined with fluffy white shearling. The shoe looked alluringly comfortable, like a Teddy bear that cuddled back. It also looked perplexingly im-

stock has become a curiously fashionable object. The company's classic sandals have been omnipresent in my Brooklyn neighborhood. It seems to be the rare woman who doesn't own a pair or two of sturdy Birkenstock thongs, called Gizehs, particularly if she spends a lot of time pushing a stroller or doing the elementary-school run. Women like me who, in our twenties and early thirties, blithely shifted between the ease of flip-flops and the constraint of high heels, were relieved to find some kindly support for our increasingly middle-aged feet. Women are so accustomed to the expectation that shoes will be uncomfortable—they will chafe our heels, or squash our toes, or make our insteps ache—that slip-



The company's shearling-lined sandals are like a Teddy bear that cuddles back. They are witty, provocative, and slightly silly.

tan fur of a Chinese gazelle. The piece is now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, in New York, and is celebrated for its suggestive conjunction of the domestic and the erotic. Oppenheim's teacup came to mind last fall, while I was browsing in a shoe store and noticed that Birkenstock had created a peculiar version of its Ari-

practical: if it's cold enough for fur, it's too cold—and likely too wet—for open-toed shoes. The sandal was witty, provocative, and slightly silly. Like an iPad, or an eight-dollar bottle of cold-pressed juice, it seemed the covetable answer to a need that hadn't existed before it came along.

In recent years, the homely Birken-

ping on Birkenstocks felt revelatory.

Some of my peers found Birkenstocks irredeemably ugly, or too vivid a reminder of their shambolic college days; or they disliked the way that Birkenstocks can look alarmingly boat-like on larger feet. But others, like me, loved the fact that they supplied comfort without completely capitulating

on style. Recently, the sandals had become available not just in mud brown or mud beige but also in contemporary hues like silver and patent white. Even if Birkenstocks were best kept out of the playground sprinkler, the worst thing about them was that, come colder weather, you had to take them off.

The furry Birkenstock got its start on a Paris runway. In 2012, Phoebe Philo, the creative director of Céline, presented her latest collection on models wearing Arizona-style sandals lined with mink. Céline's homage to Birkenstocks, which fashion magazines began calling Furkenstocks, became a hot item: Miley Cyrus was photographed wearing a bejewelled pair with harem pants and a bra top. That season, Giambattista Valli, the Italian designer, offered a metallic version of Birkenstocks, edged with studs. And then Givenchy produced its own twist on Birkenstocks: sandals made of soft black leather printed with a delicate pattern of pink roses. Even Manolo Blahnik, the designer of very high-heeled shoes, declared himself a Birkenstock aficionado—when it came to his own feet, at least. Not long ago, *Vogue* posted a story on its Web site titled “Pretty Ugly: Why *Vogue* Girls Have Fallen for Birkenstock.” Emma Morrison, a fashion assistant, was quoted saying, “There’s nothing better than a really pretty dress with an ugly shoe.”

The Birkenstock company traces its roots to 1774. Church records in Langen-Bergheim, a town outside Frankfurt, indicate that one Johann Adam Birkenstock was registered there as a shoemaker. In the late nineteenth century, a descendant named Konrad Birkenstock opened two shops in Frankfurt. He made shoes, not sandals. At the time, the insoles of shoes were typically flat; Konrad's innovation was to make shoes with insoles that were contoured to fit and support the foot.

In the early twentieth century, as shoe production became increasingly industrialized, Konrad developed flexible rubber insoles that could be inserted into commercially made shoes to create a comfortable *Fussbett*, or “foot bed.” (Early Birkenstock shoeboxes featured an illustration of a giant's foot on a bed.) He became an

orthopedic authority, as did his son, Carl Birkenstock, who joined the family business in the teens. Carl eventually wrote several books and pamphlets about foot health; they were filled with cross-sectional drawings of feet misshapen by inappropriate shoes. Carl Birkenstock's son Karl joined the business, and in the sixties the company began producing sandals. According to company lore, Karl experimented in his family kitchen, baking a blend of cork and latex to produce a material that was light, resilient, and supportive.

The company's first sandal, called the Madrid, had a contoured cork foot bed and a buckled strap that crossed in a band at the toes. It was an exercise sandal rather than a fashion item: the shoe was supposed to feel as if it would fall off unless the wearer constantly gripped the contoured toe bar, toning the calf muscle in the process. The Germans, unsurprisingly, have a word for this phenomenon: *Angstreflex*, or “fear reflex.”

Birkenstock was not the only German company devoted to creating shoes that strengthened the foot. Orthopedic footwear is to Germany what furniture design is to Sweden: Wörishofer sandals also feature a cork sole and a contoured foot bed, and Berke-mann makes sandals with soles of lightweight poplar wood. Germans have long extolled the virtues of walking. The spa culture of the nineteenth century, which drew tourists from all over Europe, cultivated the habit of therapeutic walking after bathing or drinking the waters. The desirability of a strong foot as the foundation of a healthy body influenced the theories of such nineteenth-century figures as Sebastian Kneipp, a Bavarian Catholic priest who advocated walking barefoot in wet grass, on wet stones, and through snow. (A line of bath and beauty products is still manufactured under his name.) German podiatric concerns also had a darker expression: Sander Gilman, a historian of medicine, has noted that, in anti-Semitic German-language literature of the fin de siècle, a flat, malformed foot was no less a caricature of the Jew than was a hooked nose.

In December, I visited Neustadt, a

Fine Antique Jewelry
(Yellow gold, platinum, European cut diamonds, 1890-1900)



Snowflake pendant brooch, by Tiffany & Co. \$38,500

Shown actual size

Bangle bracelet \$22,500

Fancy cut turquoise fleur-de-lis pendant brooch \$6,750

FIRESTONE AND PARSON
30 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02116
(617) 266-1858 • www.firestoneandparson.com

ADVERTISEMENT

NEW YORKER COVER PRINTS



Ilonka Karasz, May 22, 1971

Find your favorite at
NEWYORKERSTORE.COM

town near Bonn, which is home to Birkenstock's headquarters: a glass-and-blond-wood building set in forested hills. The campus—as it is known, in the manner of tech companies—is self-consciously modern, befitting a company that now focusses less upon illness as a problem and more upon wellness as an aesthetic. As I waited in a reception area that was outfitted with stools fabricated from blocks of cork, a monitor by the reception desk showed images from a forthcoming children's collection: a beguiling loop of ethnically diverse preschoolers, pouting or grinning at the camera, pigeon-toed in patterned Mary Jane clogs or teeny Arizona sandals.

My visit fell on a cold, rainy day, and I was wearing hardy La Canadienne boots. But when I was escorted to the office of Oliver Reichert, one of the company's two top executives, I found him wearing beige fur-lined Arizonas, sockless, paired with jeans and a cashmere sweater. Reichert, an imposing forty-four-year-old with thick golden hair and a scruff of beard, amiably dismissed my concerns about the warmth of his feet. He'd be wearing the fur sandals, he said, until the temperature outside dropped to below freezing: "It is quite comfortable, and it is very warm and fresh, so it's really good."

Last year, nearly twenty million pairs of Birkenstocks were sold. The Furkenstocks fashion moment was unsought, Reichert told me, and something of a distraction. "We are not calculating what the next fashion trend is," he said. "To be honest, it will be better to be not so much in fashion right now." It had been hard to keep up with demand for certain styles, like the Arizona in white leather with a white sole. It was preferable to satisfy gently rising demand. Reichert said, "We are O.K. with having our critical mass out there, and working with them, and not having millions on top just rush in and rush out one day, because for the company it is heavy to handle this."

The brand's resurgence was no mere trend, he argued: a larger cultural shift was under way. Women were recognizing that most footwear was unhealthy.

(What is the point of having a Fitbit on your wrist if your shoes make it punishing to walk?) Reichert said, "You cannot walk all day like this"—he shifted his weight onto his toes, then minced forward for a few steps, as if he were wearing heels. "Talk to your friends, and ask them to show you their feet. You will see a lot of crooked feet, and you will say, 'This is torture.'" The



popularity of Birkenstocks, he argued, indicated a desire for a return to a more natural state, at least where footwear was concerned. "People say, 'People will be completely ugly that way'—you don't do any pedicure at all, you are not washing your hair,

you are not taking showers because it is bad for nature, you are not using soap," he said. "I am not talking about this! I am saying, Accept that the human being is built like this."

Consumers, Reichert noted, have become increasingly concerned about the provenance of what they wear, and about the environmental and social impact of their clothing choices. Birkenstock is proud that its sandals are still made in Germany, rather than in China, and the company honors a promise to repair worn-out sandals, no matter how decrepit. "Ask your mother and she will say this is normal—yes, you buy shoes at the shoe store, and you bring the shoes back and they repair them," he said. "In former days, a pair of shoes was an expensive thing. Now you can buy a pair of trousers for under ten euros at Primark—a low-cost European chain—but this will be a brief trend, and then it will be gone. Because even the youngest kids will understand that, in Bangladesh, someone had to suffer for their ten-euro trousers, and it is not a fair deal at all."

Reichert assumed his leadership role at Birkenstock in 2013, with the task of restructuring a company that had become unwieldy in its organization and unreliable in its production. As Karl Birkenstock withdrew from company operations, in the aughts, management and ownership of the company passed to his three sons: Christian, Stephan, and Alex Birkenstock. It was not a successful arrangement. There

were dozens of subsidiaries and lines, each headed by a different brother, and often competing against one another. "It was like a huge nightmare—everybody with his teams," Reichert says. Two years ago, Stephan left the business. ("I was the heavyweight boxer, and I convinced him to leave," Reichert told me, convincingly.) Ownership is now divided between Christian and Alex, but they are no longer actively involved. "The mistake was done by Karl Birkenstock," Reichert told me. "A very European mistake. You should choose one. Like in the monarchy. You can't say, 'I was king, I have three sons, so I divide the kingdom in three pieces.'"

Reichert has sought to explore new markets. He expects to start offering Birkenstock leather bags, and wants to expand into other products that emphasize comfort, including mattresses and desk chairs. These plans may not all pay off—it's hard to imagine Birkenstock displacing Vitra in the corporate boardroom—but Reichert is undaunted. "It is a sleeping giant," he said of the company. "If you try to awake a sleeping giant, you should do it slowly and very smoothly, because if he moves too fast he will destroy a lot of things. So we are kissing, touching, very slowly trying to wake him up."

Reichert has been introducing other Birkenstocks for cold weather. For years, the company has made a mule called the Boston, which in Germany is typically worn as an indoor shoe. Last fall, a shearling-lined Boston, in slate-blue suède, appeared in stores. I own a pair, and they are the best argument I know of for working from home. No matter how odd a new Birkenstock may appear at first, Reichert told me, wearing is believing. "This is the magic about the product—you don't have to talk about it, you simply show the product, give it to the people to try on," Reichert said. "You try to survive your first visual influence. It is love on the second sight."

One of Birkenstock's main factories is outside Görlitz, which is sixty miles east of Dresden, in Saxony. Görlitz was spared the aerial bombing that gutted Dresden's architectural heart during the Second World War,

and it is sometimes called the most beautiful town in Germany. Gorgeously painted medieval, Baroque, and rococo buildings cluster on hilly cobblestone streets that lead to picturesque market squares. A magnificent Art Nouveau department store, now shuttered but scheduled to reopen as a shopping center, doubled as the interior of the Grand Budapest Hotel in the Wes Anderson film.

Birkenstock employs some nine hundred people in Görlitz. When I visited the factory, it smelled as pungent as a bakery, redolent with the scent of cooking latex and cork. In the area where soles are made, liquid ethylene-vinyl acetate—a flexible, lightweight polymer known as E.V.A.—was being poured into footprint-shaped molds on a carousel. Nearby were dozens of bales of jute, two layers of which are required for each foot bed. Across the factory were several enormous tanks filled with liquid latex. In a hangar-size room, sacks containing ground-up cork, imported from Portugal, were massed in rows. One sack was open, and I reached in for a handful of cork. It was startlingly light to the touch, and felt as if I were running my fingers through beach sand on a planet with a lesser gravitational pull than Earth's.

To form the signature Birkenstock foot bed, the latex and the cork are blended in a proprietary formula, creating a brownish granulated paste that, in its prebaked state, bears an unfortunate visual resemblance to cat vomit. In the vulcanization area, which was pleasantly warm, I watched as measured quantities of this paste were spewed mechanically into dozens of stainless-steel, foot-shaped molds. A young man in shorts and a T-shirt worked swiftly along the line: he pressed a layer of jute onto each pile of cork-and-latex mixture, then topped it with a thin suède liner, like a dried tobacco leaf, before shunting it into an oven.

Upstairs, the production line continued: young women trimmed the excess jute and leather from the vulcanized product of the oven, brown ribbons of material piling around their feet, like the waste left over by a fishmonger. Other women, sitting under bright dressmakers' lights, marked small

Advertisement



"On second thought, forget about your leader—take us to Chile!"

Discover taste that's out of this world. One sip and you'll understand why Root: 1 is America's #1 Imported Premium Cabernet Sauvignon. Crafted from Chile's original, ungrafted root stock, Root: 1 wines always demonstrate that **Character Comes From Your Roots.**

Join us at facebook.com/root1wine.

Root: 1
[THE ORIGINAL UNGRAFTED]



©2015. Selected & Imported by Winebox Inc., New York, NY. www.root1wine.com

SWANN
AUCTION GALLERIES



Ernie Barnes, *Untitled (The Hook Shot)*, acrylic on canvas, circa 1971. Estimate \$10,000 to \$15,000.

Ascension: A Century of African-American Art

APRIL 2

Specialist: Nigel Freeman • nfreeman@swanngalleries.com

Preview: March 28, 12-5; March 30 to April 1, 10-6; April 2, 10-12

104 East 25th St, New York, NY 10010 • tel 212 254 4710

SWANNGALLERIES.COM

1A9

pieces of leather with tailors' chalk, indicating the point where the foot bed would be attached. A team of five was operating a machine that produced black Milano sandals—an Arizona with a heel strap—in size 37. One readied the pieces of leather, now equipped with buckles, to be glued to the foot bed; another supplied the soles. Hilmar Knoll, the factory's production manager, who conducted me around the factory, did a rapid calculation: among cutters, packers, machine operators, and control checkers, each Birkenstock sandal is touched by the hands of nineteen people in its manufacture.

Birkenstocks aren't cheap—in Germany, the basic Arizona costs forty-nine euros. (A pair costs a hundred dollars here.) Recently, the company launched an effort to reach customers who need a less expensive shoe, by producing sandals made from ethylene-vinyl acetate. At the factory, liquid E.V.A., in black, white, red, and blue, was being poured into molds cast from Birkenstock's core styles: the Arizona, the Madrid, the Gizeh. These models, which retail for about twenty-five euros, are intended to penetrate markets where Birkenstock has had little impact, such as South America and parts of Southeast Asia. This summer, the shoes will also be available in some U.S. locations. Finally, there are Birkenstocks that can be worn in the playground sprinkler.

In 2013, Birkenstock hired its first director of product and design, Rudy Haslbeck, who was charged with gently modernizing the brand. When I met him, in the showroom of the Birkenstock campus, he was wearing jeans, a plaid shirt, a Schott leather jacket, an Hermès scarf, and Birkenstock's version of a high-end sandal, the Milano Exquisite, whose foot bed is entirely covered with the same black leather from which the straps are made. Haslbeck told me that he'd never worn Birkenstocks before taking the job, and had initially showed up to work in sneakers, to his boss's dismay: "Oliver asked me, 'Why aren't you wearing Birkenstocks?' And I said, 'There are three style guidelines for men. One, do not wear short trousers off the beach. Two, don't wear short-sleeved shirts.

COW CHASES BOYS

What we were thinking
was bombing the cows with dirt balls
from the top of the sandbank,
at the bottom of which ran a cave-cold
brook, spring-born.
We knew the cows would pass below
to drink and we'd pried our clumps of dirt
from a crumbling ledge. Here
August lasted a million years.
There was no "we," I can tell you that now.
I did this alone. At one cow
I knew as old and cloudy-eyed
I threw the dirt balls as if it were a sport
at which I was skilled.
Boom, a puff of dust off her hip, *boom, boom*: drilled
her ribs, and neck, and one more
too close to where she made her milk.
She swung round and chased me up an apple tree.
Her rage surprised me, and her alacrity.
She looked up. I looked down at her.
As with many things, I did this alone.
We both knew we'd soon be called home.

—Thomas Lux

And, three, don't wear sandals.' And he was like, 'Forget number three.'"

Haslbeck pointed at the showroom shelves. "All the products in this room are united by one single thing," he told me. "You must not change the foot bed. So design-wise this is really challenging." Some tweaks were very subtle. A man's sandal called the Zurich—which was introduced nearly fifty years ago, and consists of a single wide strap covering much of the mid-foot—had been updated with thicker leather, chunky gold buckles, and the kind of crêpe sole found on a Clarks desert boot. "It is very heavy, very masculine," Haslbeck said. "You only buy this once in your life, because it will last forever."

Other designs were more adventurous. There was a Boston mule made from textured velvet in crimson or gold, inspired by a Persian-lamb coat that Haslbeck had discovered in a flea market. An Arizona sandal had a rose-gold leather foot bed and an upper made from pinkish-peach tweed threaded with iridescent silver. It looked as if it had been cut from the sleeve of a Chanel jacket. Another Ar-

izona sandal, in black leather, had been lined in sapphire-blue shearling. "The first year, I did white," he explained. "This season, I thought, Now I can add color." There were even a few sandals with stacked heels that were about an inch high. "It's the most comfortable height," Haslbeck said. "Waitresses at restaurants, they usually have a heel like that."

This fall, the company plans to introduce a range of closed-toe shoes and boots that look like ordinary footwear but feel on the inside like Birkenstocks. To create a shoe with a more streamlined profile, Haslbeck explained, he had trimmed the saucer-like rim of the Birkenstock foot bed—which, in a sandal, protects the foot, but which also makes a large foot look even larger. He showed me a whimsical pair of mauve high-top boots with a white sneaker bottom. They were reminiscent of Campers: offering comfort while also being youthful and energetic. Next was a black ankle boot for men. It was impossible to tell that it was a Birkenstock, unless you felt inside.

Haslbeck then presented a women's

lace-up boot in burnished brown leather and lined with shearling. Its toe box had the same shape as a Birkenstock clog—roomy around the big toe, and tapering to the pinkie—but the family resemblance was that of distant cousins, not siblings. The boot, he noted, could be worn without socks all winter—like an Ugg, the Australian sheepskin bootie that was originally designed for surfers emerging from chilly water. Haslbeck suggested that I try on the lace-up boot, and I slipped my bare foot into it. With the warmth and softness of the fur, and the cradling comfort of the foot bed, it felt wonderful. I think I may have gasped.

“That is what I expected,” Haslbeck said.

Haslbeck was wearing thick black socks with his Milanos. “My granny knitted them,” he said. He preferred them to the barefoot style adopted by his boss. “Oliver is the tough guy,” he said. “I am suffering from cold feet, especially in the morning.” In the fall, the company plans to introduce a line of socks, manufactured by a partner in Germany, alongside a marketing campaign promoting “socks and ’Stocks” as a stylish choice for Americans. This effort may not succeed, but the socks are charming. After I examined a prototype of knee-high socks in a textured oatmeal yarn, I was shown a tube of four-ply cream-colored cashmere, like a luxurious cable sweater for an indulged dachshund. It had a shaped foot with a split toe, like a Japanese tabi sock. Long enough to reach its wearer’s thigh, it came with a cashmere garter attached. It was the most unusual sock I had ever seen, and though it was hard to imagine it being worn by anyone other than a bride in Lapland, Meret Oppenheim surely would have approved.

The transformation of Birkenstock from a niche German health item into a global fashion brand might not have happened without the involvement of a woman named Margot Fraser. Born in 1929 and raised in Berlin, Fraser became a successful dressmaker in Bremen. But she felt stifled in Germany, and by the early sixties she was married to an American and living in Northern California.

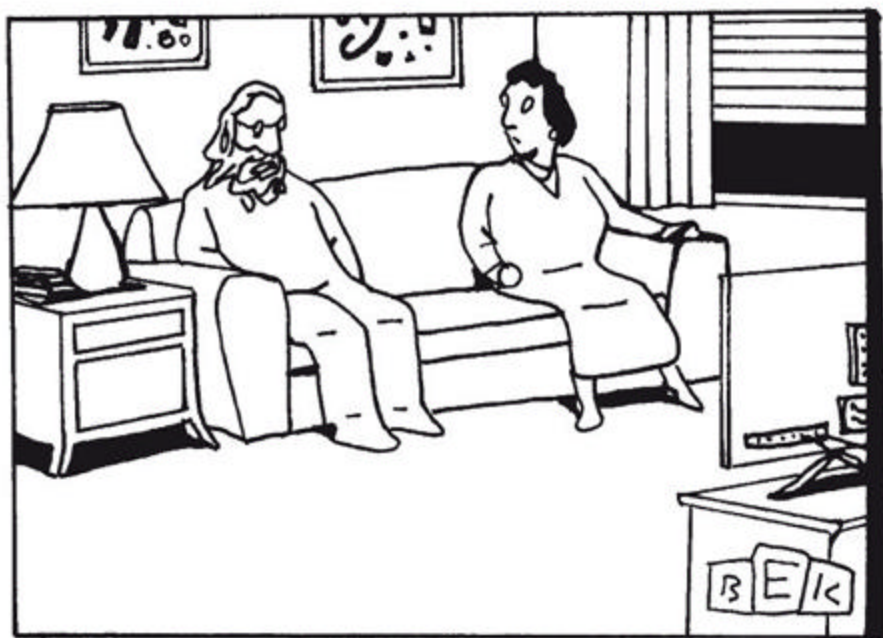
Fraser suffered from foot pain, and, in 1966, on a trip back to Germany, she bought a pair of Madrid sandals. “All the exercises the doctor told me to do, like standing on a phone book and grabbing it with my toes (which made me feel like a hero if I did it for three minutes), I did automatically with these sandals,” she writes in a 2009 book, “Dealing with the Tough Stuff.” Upon returning to the U.S., she contacted Karl Birkenstock and proposed importing his sandals. At the time, she writes, “all women’s shoes were narrow and had pointed toes. Even the so-called healthy shoes still had heels. Because millions of women in the United States had painful feet, I thought it would be easy to get them into this marvelous footwear.”

When shoe-store managers told her that the sandals would never sell, a friend suggested that she put up a booth at a health-food convention in San Francisco. Her earliest customers were the owners of health-food stores, who spent all day on their feet; they started stocking Birkenstocks on their shelves alongside granola and vitamins. Fraser, who is eighty-five, told me recently that the shoe-store managers who had rejected her began begging her for sandals. “They came to me saying, ‘Look, there is a health-food store on my street, and people are walking out with shoe-

boxes—they should be walking out of my store with shoeboxes.” Like the Earth shoe, which emerged from Scandinavia in the early seventies, and had a supposedly health-giving shape in which the heel cup was lower than the toe, Birkenstocks became associated with the counterculture.

Since then, Birkenstocks have been cyclically fashionable. In 1990, Kate Moss appeared in an enormously influential spread in the magazine *The Face*; she was pictured holding a half-smoked cigarette and wearing a baggy sweater, a bikini bottom, and a pair of Birkenstock sandals. Moss’s look prefigured the brand’s wider embrace in the early nineties, when Birkenstocks were paired with plaid shirts and granny dresses. Before Phoebe Philo’s surrealist reinvention, Birkenstock’s previous runway apotheosis came in 1992, when Marc Jacobs used them in his notorious grunge collection, for Perry Ellis.

The bold tastes of the American consumer influenced the production in Germany, Fraser told me, though sometimes her ideas met with resistance: “When I started to ask for color, the man who had to distribute the sandals in Switzerland said, ‘This woman is going to ruin us. We are orthopedic—we don’t need color.’ But we brought color into the United



“You know what? I’m still not interested in Bruce Jenner.”

States, and it helped sales everywhere.”

In Germany, it is widely believed that a firm insole promotes a healthier foot—a conviction often shared by American podiatrists when prescribing orthotics. American consumers, however, have been conditioned by sneaker design to associate comfort with cushioning. In 2000, Birkenstock introduced to America sandals with a foot bed that incorporated an extra layer of cushioning: a pillow-top mattress for the feet.

Twice a year, the footwear buyers of America travel to the Las Vegas Convention Center to attend FN Platform, a three-day trade show that bills itself as “The Global Showcase for Branded Footwear.” Sixteen hundred shoe brands exhibited at a show in February, among them Birkenstock. At the company’s booth, I met David Kahan, who, since 2013, has run Birkenstock’s American division. Kahan, a trim, athletic man of fifty-four, with a salesman’s confident and friendly manner, was previously the head of Rockport Shoes. Margot Fraser had been retired for eight years when Kahan took over; her departure was followed by a period of turmoil, with a rapid turnover of leadership, and frustration on the part of retailers. “There was no inventory, it was very hard to replenish, and very hard to get product,” Robert Goldberg, the president of Harry’s Shoes, on the Upper West Side, told me. Under Kahan, Birkenstock USA is now “a well-oiled machine,” Goldberg says.

In Las Vegas, Kahan had paired a handsome navy suit with black leather Birkenstock desert boots. “Rockport didn’t make a bad shoe, but these blow away anything they had,” Kahan told me. He had just finished a meeting with a buyer from Nordstrom, one of the company’s most important clients, and had been delighted to see that the buyer was wearing black Arizona Exquisites. “Anyone can have a hot item—boat shoes are hot, canvas sneakers are hot,” he said. “But this is about being a brand that is on a different level.” He looked down the aisle at his neighboring venders. “They are all selling shoes, and one person’s shoes are basically the same as another person’s

shoes. The only shoe where you can tell what it is from fifteen feet away is a pair of Birkenstock sandals,” he said. He nodded toward a woman passing by in a pair of wedge sandals. “What kind of shoe is she wearing? Who the hell knows?”

Kahan explained that the boots and shoes arriving in stores this fall would still be recognizable as Birkenstocks but would capitalize on other trends in the marketplace. “I use ‘Birkenstock’ as a verb,” he said. “We did a sneaker bottom for spring—sneakers are a hot trend in the market, so we Birkenstocked it. We Birkenstocked Doc Martens; we Birkenstocked a motorcycle boot.” There was even a Birkenstocked Ugg: a fur-lined bootie with a ridged sneaker bottom and two sandal-like leather straps across the foot. Kahan told me, “You go to Bergdorf’s and get in the elevator, somebody is going to look down and go, ‘Where did you get them?’ That is a statement item.”

Inside the booth, sandals and shoes were arranged on shelves that were accessorized with vases of wheatgrass. A slender model in black leggings and a loose black shirt was on call, and she slipped a sandal onto her perfectly pedicured foot at the request of a member of the sales staff, who were attending to the visiting buyers at half a dozen small tables. A store owner from the Midwest was being urged to try on a Boston mule in a nontraditional color—zinfandel and tourmaline were the company’s newest offerings—while visitors from New York were being shown the latest styles in black. Among them was Zacky Joseph, who owns Zacky’s, on lower Broadway. Joseph told me that the black Gizah and the white Arizona were the best-selling Birkenstocks in his store; the sales representative working with him urged him to consider also stocking the Florida, a three-strap sandal that fashion editors had been showing an interest in this season. Joseph liked a Doc Martens-style boot, but he was understandably skeptical about the Birkenstocked Ugg. “It’s window dressing,” he said. “We’ll get two pairs.”

At another table sat Jonathan Skow, the designer of Mr. Turk, a menswear

line based in California. He was choosing footwear to complement the brightly colored clothes—striped twill jackets, floral-patterned pants—for sale at the company’s boutique in Palm Springs. Arrayed before him were several sandals, including a black-on-black fur Arizona, and a brown leather Zurich with a crêpe sole. The closed-toe shoes and boots were not of particular interest to him, he told me: “Our guy is more social—going to bars, going to clubs, going to dinner parties, going to brunch. He doesn’t really go into the office. And he doesn’t go into the woods.”

Skow was wearing jeans and some clothes of his own design: a vivid patterned shirt and a Black Watch plaid blazer. On his feet were black Arizona sandals. “I am a superfan,” he said. “I was in Morocco this summer, and the chicest look was the white Birkenstock and the djellabah and Versace glasses. It was amazing. The guys looked great.” In his opinion, Birkenstocks were both comfortable and good-looking. “What more can you ask for?” he said. “They give a little pizzazz to any outfit.”

In one corner of the booth, a few pairs of Birkenstock-branded socks were on display, though not the cashmere fantasia I’d seen in Neustadt. Skow said that he approved of sandals with socks, though he acknowledged that it was not to everyone’s taste. “I am fifty-two, and I have been a kooky, kooky dresser since the eighties, and I don’t think I’ve ever had more people stare at me than walking through Paris in Birkenstocks in socks,” he said. Birkenstocks always generated strong emotions. After posting about them on his Facebook page, he had received lengthy denunciations in response. “But that is what fashion is about,” he said. “That’s what makes things interesting—when you look at something, and you aren’t sure if you like it or not.” ♦

THAT’S TOO BAD DEPARTMENT

From the Burlington (Mass.) Patch.

At 1:37 p.m. a South Bedford Street caller reported he was doing construction work on a house when a male stopped and started yelling at him and his workers. The man said he was upset because he travelled from Maryland for an autograph signing that was done for the day. Police sent him to the bus stop to return home.

MOTHER OF DRAGONS

BY HEATHER HAVRILESKY

I am not Khaleesi, Mother of Dragons, on “Game of Thrones.” But I am *your* mother. So when you don’t listen to me because you’re squabbling over Barbies instead? That angers me, and I must say to you, “I am your mother. Will you listen? *Swear to me!*”

And then do you reply, “My sword is yours, my life is yours, my heart is yours”? No, you don’t. You say, “But

when brutally murdering fools who refuse to bow down to Khaleesi, Mother of Dragons.

I am not Ma from “Little House on the Prairie.” But I am *your* mother. So when you can’t do your chores without whining? That makes me mad. You like to pretend that you’re little Laura Ingalls, but would you play with a corn-

because you have never lifted a gallon of milk, let alone pulled on a cow’s udders or used a thread and needle to sew anything. And if I tried to make you sew all day long? Then Child Protective Services would have to come back for another visit.

I am not Ron Weasley’s mom, from “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone.” I don’t knit sweaters for kids who aren’t my own kids, least of all creepy orphans with bad attitudes. I also don’t cook or shoot magic out of my fingers, and if an evil snake-faced man started chasing me I’d hide in the broom closet and let him take the creepy orphan, as long as he left me alone.

But I am *your* mother. So when you’re crying like crazy over not getting dessert tonight, shrieking and weeping as if your parents have been murdered and an evil snake-faced man is chasing you? That really pisses me off. So I say, “*Girls who shriek like they’re about to be murdered when they don’t get dessert never, ever get dessert, ever! Now go to your room!*” And then you scream and cry and stomp off to your room, and I start planning tomorrow night’s dessert, because I feel guilty and conflicted. Molly Weasley would never do that, and neither would Ma Ingalls. Khaleesi, Mother of Dragons, might plan dessert, if by “dessert” you mean that relaxing time right after dinner when one invades a sovereign land and brutally murders all of its wealthy slave owners.

But I am not Khaleesi, Mother of Dragons. I am your mother. For your purposes, in fact, there is no difference. Because even though I would never cut off your hands, I *could* make you play with nothing but old vegetables from now on. That’s the kind of power I can wield, even though I never actually wield it.

You must obey me. I know it seems like I must obey *you*, but that is an illusion. I am the one in charge here. Seriously, I am. Stop looking at me that way! I will answer injustice with justice! I mean it! You have to do what I say, or else! I am the blood of the dragon! Why are you laughing? Reject this gift and I shall show you no mercy! Where are you going? Wait! Wa-a-a-ait! ♦



she started it!” How can your mother possibly respond to that? Can she say, “*I am your mother! I am the wife of your father, and you sprang from these loins! The next time you raise a hand to me is the last time you have hands*”? No, she can’t say that, because then Child Protective Services will come for a visit.

It bothers me that you don’t recognize how all-powerful I am or see how hard I have toiled, all these years, to keep you clothed and fed and stuff. Sure, you say things like “Mommy, you’re the best mommy in the whole world!” But we both know that’s not even close to true. You’re just in a good mood because I let you have sour gummy worms on top of your strawberry fro-yo. Khaleesi, Mother of Dragons, would never offer her vast legions of freed slaves fro-yo, unless “fro-yo” is also an acronym for that chilling, you-only-live-once sensation that you get

cob doll for hours? No. You’d throw that shit at the wall and whine, “No fair! I want a *real* toy, not an old vegetable!” And I’d say, “*That’s it! You’re playing with nothing but old vegetables from now on!*” And then you’d cry and stomp your feet, and I’d send you to your room, and then I’d feel all guilty and conflicted, and, instead of churning milk into butter or frying up some lard cakes like Ma would, I’d assuage my guilt by ordering you some new Legos online.

And it would bother me how little you’d seem to care about your brand-new Legos when they arrived. Sure, you’d open the box and start building with them immediately, but soon after that you and your sister would be screaming over who gets this or that special block. Could I say, “*Girls! Go milk Bessie and then stitch on your samplers for the rest of the afternoon*”? No,

LETTER FROM SEOUL

ABOUT FACE

Why is South Korea the world's plastic-surgery capital?

BY PATRICIA MARX

If you want to feel bad about your looks, spend some time in Seoul. An eerily high number of women there—and men, too—look like anime princesses. Subway riders primp in front of full-length mirrors installed throughout the stations for that purpose. Job applicants are typically required to attach photographs to their résumés. Remarks from relatives, such as “You would

of plastic surgery per capita in the world. (Brazil, if you want the title you’re going to have to lift a few more rear ends.) The United States has sagged to No. 6, though we still have the greatest total number of procedures. It has been estimated that between one-fifth and one-third of women in Seoul have gone under the knife, and one poll reported by the BBC puts the figure at fifty per cent or

In January, I spent a couple of weeks in Seoul’s so-called Improvement Quarter. This area is in the high-end Gangnam district, the Beverly Hills of Seoul. I realized that getting stuck in traffic would give me more worry lines, so my translator and I took the subway, which is equipped with Wi-Fi, heated seats, and instructional videos about what to do in the event of a biological or chemical attack. The walls of the stations are plastered with giant ads for plastic-surgery clinics, many picturing twinkly cheerleader types, sometimes wearing jewelled tiaras and sleeveless party dresses, and often standing next to former versions of themselves (“before” pictures)—dour wallflowers with droopy eyes, low-bridged noses, and jawlines shaped like



“We want to have surgeries while we are young so we can have our new faces for a long time,” one young woman said.

be a lot prettier if you just had your jaw tapered,” are considered no more insulting than “You’d get a lot more for your apartment if you redid the kitchen.”

South Koreans do not merely brood about their physiognomy. They put their money where their mouths—and eyes and noses—used to be. By some estimates, the country has the highest rate

higher for women in their twenties. Men, by one account, make up fifteen per cent of the market, including a former President of the country, who underwent double-eyelid surgery while in office. Statistics in this field are iffy because the industry is not regulated and there are no official records, but we’ll get to that in a grimmer paragraph.

C-clamps. “This is the reason celebrities are confident even without their makeup,” one caption read. “Everyone but you has done it,” another said.

You know you are in the right neighborhood by the preponderance of slightly bruised and swollen-faced men and women in their twenties and thirties going about their business, despite the

bandages. Another clue: there are between four and five hundred clinics and hospitals within a square mile. They are packed into boxy concrete buildings that look as if they were all built on the same day. (The area consisted largely of pear and cabbage farms and straw-roofed houses until it was treated to its own speedy face-lift in preparation for the 1988 Seoul Olympics.) Some clinics occupy as many as sixteen floors, and the largest encompass several high-rises. Most are more modest. Tall vertical signs in Korean jut from the buildings and overhang the sidewalk like unwrapped rolls of surgical tape. They advertise the names of the clinics, several of which my Korean friends translated for me: Small Face, Magic Nose, Dr. 4 Nose, Her She, Before and After, Reborn, Top Class, Wannabe, 4 Ever, Cinderella, Center for Human Appearance, and April 31 Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. There is also a maternity clinic that specializes in beauty enhancement for brand-new mothers and mothers-to-be.

My translator, Kim Kibum, agreed to pose as a potential patient, and I tagged along with him as we went from one clinic to another, conferring with doctors about possible ways to remodel ourselves. Kibum, a professor at Sotheby's Institute of Art, visiting his family in Seoul, is thirty-one. He is not considered young for cosmetic surgery, which, like computer coding, competitive gymnastics, and Trix cereal, is for kids. A typical high-school graduation gift for a Korean teen-ager is either a nose job or a blepharoplasty, also called a double-eyelid surgery (the insertion of a crease in the eyelid to make the eye look bigger), which is by far the most common procedure performed in Korea.

"When you're nineteen, all the girls get plastic surgery, so if you don't do it, after a few years, your friends will all look better, but you will look like your unimproved you," a college student who'd had a double-eyelid procedure told me. "We want to have surgeries while we are young so we can have our new faces for a long time," another young woman said. That is no longer a possibility for me, I'm afraid.

"Let's ask if they can make us look alike," Kibum whispered, at Small Face Plastic Surgery, a hospital that specializes in facial contouring, before we met with a consultant to

discuss surgical options and to haggle over the price. (The cost of procedures and services in South Korea varies tremendously, but it is not uncommon to pay a third of what it would cost in the United States. As with Bloomingdale's towels and sheets, it's impossible not to get a discount.) Kibum has monolid eyes, a sculpted nose, a perfectly M-shaped upper-lip line, and chin stubble. I have none of those things, nor am I as handsome as Kibum. We were seated on a leather sofa in a purple-lit reception area that looked like the Starship Enterprise, redecorated by Virgin Atlantic. The women who work there—as in all the clinics that I visited—wear uniforms of short skirts, high heels, and tight tops. Their bodies and faces, aside from the occasional nose shaped too much like a ski jump, are advertisements for the handiwork of the Korean medical profession. Everyone is female, except most of the doctors and the barista at the coffee bar (complimentary cappuccino!) in the waiting room of I.D. Hospital.

I asked Kibum to explain the name Small Face. "Koreans, and Asians in general, are self-conscious about having big heads," he said. "This is why in group photos a girl will try to stand far in the back to make her face relatively smaller. This is also why jaw-slimming surgery"—sometimes called V-line surgery—"is so popular." The desirable, narrow jawline can be achieved by shaving the mandible using oscillating saws or by breaking and then realigning both jaws, an operation that originated as a treatment for severe congenital deformities. (Last year, a clinic was fined for exhibiting on its premises more than two thousand jaw fragments in two vitrines, each bone labelled with the name of the patient from whom it was carved.)

Kibum and I paged through the "Look Book" of testimonials and photographs of former patients. (From a similar binder at Grand Plastic Hospital: "Pain for a short moment! Living as a perfect, beautiful woman for the rest of my life!" "I used to look like I had been starving for a while, with no hint of luxury. My eyes were sunken, my forehead was flat. . . ." "Now I'm good-looking even from the back!") "When

Advertisement

ON THE TOWN

BE THE FIRST TO HEAR ABOUT EVENTS, PROMOTIONS, AND SPECIAL OFFERS FROM OUR ADVERTISERS



Forecast: Chile Spring

Back-yard entertaining season is nearly here at last. Offer a wine with true varietal character as the perfect accompaniment to your spread (or as an ideal gift for your host). Crafted exclusively from grapes grown on original, ungrafted root systems and produced using sustainable methods, Root:1 wines showcase intense fruit flavors and an authenticity that you and your guests will love.

Visit

facebook.com/root1wine

or scan the QR code to learn more about Root:1 wines.



Root:1
[THE ORIGINAL UNGRAFTED]

newyorkeronthetown.com

Follow us on Twitter: @NewYorkerPromo

I was growing up, in the eighties, the ideal look was Western—sculpted, well-defined faces with big eyes,” Kibum told me. “I would argue that that has changed as a result of the plastic-surgery culture. Everyone started looking alike, so ‘quirky’ and ‘different’ came to be prized.” Many dispute the notion that Korean plastic surgery today emulates a Western aesthetic, pointing out, for example, that big eyes are universally considered appealing and that pale skin connotes affluence. Still, just about everyone I talked to in Seoul confirmed the trend toward a baby-faced appearance. The Bagel Girl look (short for “baby-faced and glamorous”), a voluptuous body with a schoolgirl face, was all the rage. Another popular procedure is *aegyo sal*, meaning “eye smiles” or “cute skin.” It entails injecting fat under the eyes, which gives you the mug of an adorable toddler.

In the Small Face reception area, a TV was showing a program called “The Birth of a Beauty.” The episode was about a woman who had always wanted to be an actress but, because of her looks, had had to settle for being an extra, until . . . you guessed it. Meanwhile, Kibum answered a new-patient questionnaire. Here are a few of the questions:

Reason you want surgery?

- ☐ Preparing for job
- ☐ Wedding
- ☐ Regaining self-confidence
- ☐ Suggestions from people

What kind of a look do you want?

- ☐ Natural
- ☐ Very different
- ☐ Completely different

Which entertainer do you most want to resemble? _____

Do you have other friends who are considering plastic surgery? How many?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2-3
- ☐ 3-5
- ☐ Many

If you get the result you want from

plastic surgery, what’s the thing you want most to do?

- ☐ Upload a selfie without using Photoshop
- ☐ Get a lover
- ☐ Find a job
- ☐ Enter a competition for face beauty

We visited three clinics that day, including one that featured a plastic-surgery museum (complete with, among other oddments, deformed skulls, postoperative shampoo, and a fun-house mirror) and a flashy medical center (white leather sofas and marble floors) that was investigated last year after photographs turned up on

Instagram showing staff members whooping it up in an operating room—blowing out birthday candles, eating hamburgers, posing with a pair of breast implants—while the killjoy patient lay unconscious on the table. We met with three consultants and two doctors. The protocol often involves talking to a consultant, who then briefs a doctor, who then looks you over and draws lines on your face before you meet again with the consultant, who closes the deal. In most of the offices, there was a skull on the table for educational purposes.

When Kibum asked the practitioners what they thought he should have done, most asked, “Do you really need anything done?” When I asked what procedures I might need, I was told that, in addition to laser therapy and a forehead pull (“Asians don’t have wrinkles there, because raising your eyebrows is rude,” a doctor told me), I should get a face-lift or, at least, a thread-lift—a subcutaneous web of fibre implanted in the face to hoist my skin upward, like a Calatrava suspension bridge—except that, because I’m Caucasian, my skin is too thin for a thread-lift. I also heard so many tut-tuts about the bags under my eyes that I started to worry that Korean Air wouldn’t let me take them aboard as carry-ons on the flight home.

One doctor, as he talked to me, made a broad, swiping hand gesture that suggested that a lot of erasing was in order. Kibum translated: “He thinks you should get Botox around your eyes and fore-

head, and reposition the fat under your eyes.”

Me: Does he think I should put filler in my cheeks?

Kibum: He doesn’t recommend filler, because it’s gone in eight months and you’d need a shitload of it.

Kibum and I didn’t have the nerve to request that we be turned into a matching pair, but it wouldn’t have been much of a stretch. Every doctor I interviewed said that he had patients who’d brought in photographs of celebrities, asking to be remade in their likenesses; or, for instance, with Kim Tae-hee’s nose and Lee Min-jung’s eyes. One doctor told me that he had a patient who showed him a cartoon that she wanted to resemble. (He said no.) Also, an increasing number of women are having procedures at the same time as their daughters, arranging for matching operations so that the daughters’ looks are attributed to nature rather than to suture.

“Surgery tourists” from abroad make up about a third of the business in South Korea, and, of those, most come from China. One reason is that, throughout Asia, the “Korean wave” of pop culture (called *hallyu*) shapes not only what music you should listen to but what you should look like while listening to it. Cosmetic transformations can be so radical that some of the hospitals offer certificates of identity to foreign patients, who might need help convincing immigration officers that they’re not in the Witness Protection Program.

We all want to look our best, but not since seventh grade had I been in the company of people for whom appearance mattered so much. In search of a clearer understanding of why South Koreans are such lookists, I stopped by the book-cluttered office of Eunkook Suh, a psychology professor at Yonsei University, in Seoul. “One factor is that, in contrast to Western cultures, the external aspects of self (your social status, clothes, gestures, and appearance) versus the inner aspects (thoughts and feelings) matter more here,” he explained. Suh described an experiment he did in which he gave students, both at Yonsei University and at the University of California at Irvine (where he once taught) a photograph and a written description of the same person. Which format, he asked



the students, gives you a better understanding of this person? The Koreans chose the photograph, and the Americans chose the description. Suh, like others, partially attributes the Korean mindset to Confucianism, which teaches that behavior toward others is all-important. He elaborated, "In Korea, we don't care what you think about yourself. Other people's evaluations of you matter more."

Suh went on to explain that the two societies also have different ideas about personal change: "In Asian societies like Korea, a lot of people hold an incremental theory versus an entity theory about a person's potential." If you subscribe to the latter, as Suh claims we do in the United States, you believe that a person's essence is fixed and that there is only a limited potential for change. "If your American ten-year-old is a born musician and not a soccer player, you're not going to force her to play soccer," Suh said. "In Korea, they think that if you put in effort you're going to improve, so you'd force your kid to play soccer." So, in Korea, not only can you grow up to be David Beckham; you can—with a lot of work—grow up to look like David Beckham, too.

This is not a country that gives up. Surely one of the most bullied nations on earth, Korea, some historians believe, has been invaded more than four hundred times through the years, without once being the aggressor, if you don't count the Vietnam War. After the Korean War, the country's G.D.P. per capita (\$64) was less than that of Somalia, and its citizens lived under an oppressive regime. Today, South Korea has the fourteenth-highest G.D.P. in the world. Is it really surprising, then, that a country that had the resilience to make itself over so thoroughly is also the capital of cosmetic about-faces?

The national fixation on plastic surgery began in the aftermath of the Korean War, triggered by the offer made by the American occupational forces to provide free reconstructive surgery to maimed war victims. Particular credit or blame—you choose—goes to David Ralph Millard, the chief plastic surgeon for the U.S. Marine Corps, who, in response to requests from Korean citizens wishing to change their Asian eyes to Occidental ones, perfected the blepharoplasty. As Millard wrote in a 1955 monograph, the Asian eye's "absence of

Extraordinary Works of Fiction



"A remarkable novel that every American should read."

—*Minneapolis Star Tribune*

"Vivid.... Striking.... A ringing paean to love...between man and wife, parent and child, outsider and newcomer, pilgrims and promised land."

—*The Washington Post*

A Best Book of the Year
The New York Times, The Washington Post, NPR, BookPage, Oprah.com

"Breathtakingly good.... A darkly suspenseful page turner."

—*The Richmond Times-Dispatch*

"A moving story about love, celebrity, and the redemptive power of art."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

An Oprah.com Best Book of the Year



"Wrenching.... Suspenseful.... By far her best."

—*The New York Times*

"Extraordinary.... Panoramic....

Minot shows her readers that war zones cannot be contained within one country, or one region." —NPR

A Best Book of the Year
The New York Times, The Economist

Read excerpts and more at ReadingGroupCenter.com



ANCHOR Now in Paperback and eBook



the palpebral fold produces a passive expression which seems to epitomize the stoical and unemotional manner of the Oriental." The procedure was a hit, and caught on fast, especially with Korean prostitutes, who wanted to attract American G.I.s. "It was indeed a plastic surgeon's paradise," Millard wrote.

There is a word you hear a lot in Korea: *woori*. It means "we" or "us" or "we-ness," but, as explained by Kihyoung Choi in his book "A Pedagogy of Spiraling," it blurs into a collective "I." Choi writes, "When one refers to one's spouse, one does not say 'my husband' or 'my wife' but 'our husband' or 'our wife.'" (The divorce rate in Korea tripled in 2014.) "It is very important to be part of the *woori* group, to be part of your coalition or clique," Eugene Yun, a private-equity fund manager, told me. "This is the antithesis of individualism. If we go to a restaurant in a group, we'll all order the same thing. If we go into a shop, we'll often ask, 'What is the most popular item?', and just purchase that. The feel-

ing is, if you can look better, you should. Not to do so would be complacent and lazy and reflect badly on your group." He went on, "It's not that you're trying to stand out and look good. It's that you're trying not to look bad." He continued, "This is a very competitive society. In the old days, if your neighbor bought a new TV or new car you would need to buy a new TV or car. Now we all have these basic things, so the competition has moved up to comparing one's looks, health, and spiritual things as well."

For the good of all, then, let's get back to the hospitals. Options offered at various establishments we visited included Barbie-Nose Rhinoplasty ("Let it up to have doll-like sharp nose!"), Forehead Volumization ("Your beauty will increase!"), Hip-Up surgery (to achieve "a feminine and beautiful Latino-like body line"), arm-lifts, calf reductions, dimple creation, whitening injections (called Beyoncé injections by one clinic), eye-corner lowering (so you

don't look fierce), smile-lifts that curl the corners of your lips and chisel an indentation into the crooks so that your now permanently happy mouth looks as if it were drawn by a six-year-old (this operation is popular with flight attendants), and "cat surgery," to fix your floppy philtrum.

But most of the surgery performed in South Korea isn't usually too drastic, and seems technically superb. The blepharoplasty can take as little as fifteen minutes ("Less serious than getting a tooth pulled," one man I talked to said). Unlike in America, where the goal is to have the biggest you-know-whats, the desired aesthetic in Seoul is understated—"A slight variation on what everyone else has" is the way Kibum put it. "Koreans are still very conservative," Kyuhee Baik, an anthropology graduate student, told me. "It would be a disaster for a girl to show cleavage—it would make you look shallow," a nineteen-year-old who'd had her eyes and jaw done told me. "You don't want to stand out," Baik went on. "That goes back to our Confucian foundations. It's a very conformist society."

"I never thought about doing plastic surgery," said Stella Ahn, whom I met at a coffee bar with her friends Jen Park and Sun Lee, all college sophomores. "But then my father told me, 'You have my eyes, so I spoke to a plastic surgeon who'll make you more beautiful.' Afterward, I regretted it a lot. I felt: I'm not me, I lost my true self. My eyes were bruised at first, so they seemed smaller." When the swelling went down, Ahn came to like her eyes. Lee also had her eyes done at her father's urging. "He told me that beauty could be a big advantage for girls. For instance, when you go on a job interview if the interviewer saw two women who had similar abilities, of course he'd go with the better-looking one." It bears mentioning that, among the twenty-seven countries in the Organization for Economic Coöperation and Development, Korea, where the pressure to get married is significant, ranks last where gender equality is concerned.

Ahn continued, "Before I got double eyelids, the boys didn't appreciate me so much." Lee concurred. I asked if they were ever tempted to lie and say that they hadn't had surgery. "These days,



"I've asked you not to use the siege tower to meet women."

the trend is to be open,” Park said. “The reason girls don’t lie is that we don’t feel guilty,” Lee explained. “We are congratulated for having plastic surgery.”

Remember “Queen for a Day,” the TV show in which a jewelled crown and prizes, such as a washer-dryer, were awarded to the woeful housewife contestant who could convince the studio audience that she was the most woeful of all the other housewife contestants? A version of that show, “Let Me In,” is among the most widely viewed programs in South Korea. Each contestant on the show—given a nickname like Girl Who Looks Like Frankenstein, Woman Who Cannot Laugh, Flat-Chested Mother, Monkey—makes a case to a panel of beauty experts that his or her physical features have made it so impossible to live a normal life that a total surgical revamping is called for. The contestants’ parents are brought onstage, too, to apologize to their offspring not only for endowing them with crummy genes but also for being too poor to afford plastic surgery. At the end of every show, the surgically reborn contestant is revealed to the audience, which oohs and aahs and claps and cries.

There are a number of plastic-surgery reality shows in Korea along these lines, but one, “Back to My Face,” has taken a different approach. I met with Siwon Paek, the producer of the show’s pilot. In the pilot, contestants who had had at least ten surgeries compete to win a final operation that promises to undo all the previous reconstructions. Paek emphasized that the aim is to help plastic-surgery addicts come to terms psychologically with their appearance. Those with lower incomes, she said, tend to be the most compulsive about plastic surgery. “They feel they have no other way to prove themselves to people and lift themselves socially and economically,” she said. Although the “Back to My Face” pilot was popular, Paek said that she will produce no more episodes. “I didn’t have the strength to continue,” she told me. The responsibility of changing people’s lives weighed too heavily on her, she said, and finding contestants was hard. “For one month, I stood outside a dance club,” she told me. “I solicited two hundred people. Most didn’t want to go back to the way they looked before.”

In recent years, a new Korean word, *sung-gui*, began to surface online. It means “plastic-surgery monster.” A college student I spoke to defined the term for me as a person who has had so much cosmetic alteration that he or she “looks unnatural and arouses repulsion.” Not long ago, the Korea Consumer Agency reported that a third of all plastic-surgery patients were dissatisfied with the results, and seventeen per cent claimed to have suffered at least one negative side effect. The agency keeps no official records of accidents or botched surgeries, but every few months there is a story in the newspaper about someone not waking up from the anesthetic after a procedure.

Amazingly, this does not seem to hurt business. Hyon-Ho Shin, who heads the malpractice branch of the Korean lawyers’ association, told me, over tea in his office, “These days, there are so many accidents, and nearly every hospital has had a serious incident, so it doesn’t matter so much. People who are having plastic surgery accept that it’s a risk they take.” Just before I arrived in Korea, a college student who had gone in for eyelid surgery died. Before the anesthetic was administered, the doctor offered to give her a bonus jaw operation free of charge if she allowed the hospital to use her before-and-after photographs. It was later reported that the doctor was actually a dentist. Shin estimates that as many as eighty per cent of doctors doing plastic surgery are not certified in the field; these are known as “ghost doctors.” A 2005 BBC report mentioned radiologists performing double-eyelid surgeries and psychiatrists operating the liposuction machine. Shin believes that nurses and untrained assistants are wielding the scalpel, too. Sometimes a hotshot doctor with a recognizable name will be there to greet the patient, but after the anesthetic kicks in it’s hello, Doogie Howser!

Another surgeon, Dr. Ha, told me, “The larger hospitals have become factories. One hospital even sets timers in the operating room so that, for instance, each doctor has to finish an eyelid surgery in under thirty minutes, or a nose job in under an hour and a half. If they go over, there are financial consequences and verbal reprimands.” These lapses have become an issue of national concern. Last year, a Korean lawmaker complained to parliament that seventy-seven

per cent of plastic-surgery clinics were not equipped with mandatory defibrillators or ventilators.

When the mother of South Korea’s former President Chun Doo Hwan was trying to conceive a child, in the nineteen-twenties, she met a wandering monk who told her that she had the face of someone who would be the mother of a great man—unless her buckteeth got in the way of destiny. With dispatch, she knocked out her front teeth using a log. (Some accounts say that she used a rock.) Her son ruled Korea from 1980 to 1988 as a brutal and repressive dictator.

If it worked for Mrs. Hwan, it could work for you. It is not uncommon for a Korean who is considering face alteration to seek the opinion of a professional face reader—i.e., someone who offers advice on which nips and tucks will do the most good. The occupation grew in prominence after the financial crisis of 1997–98, when competition for jobs became fierce.

On my last day in Seoul, I decided to pay fifty dollars to consult a face reader. “Should I smile?” I asked my translator, who communicated the question to a squat old man in a quilted Chinese-style jacket, who was, like so many others I met that week, gazing critically at my countenance. “Just be natural” came the answer. We were in the face reader’s dark, tiny office, which was crammed with oil paintings, an old TV, drawings of the body segmented as if they were cuts of beef, and lots of tchotchkes (a Manchester United paperweight, a small Buddha, a piggy bank).

After asking me when my birthday was, the face reader offered some general truths. “He says if there is a scar between your eyes it makes you desolate from all your wishes and hopes. Then totally, yes. One should have plastic surgery,” my translator said. “He says if there’s a nose bridge that isn’t straight enough, it disconnects you from your family.”

But, I asked, what about me?

“He says your eyebrows look like you have a lot of friends,” the translator said. “And your nose indicates that you are going to be wealthy.”

Should I change anything?

“He doesn’t have a bad thing to say about you. But your teeth might be a little weak. And you should eat a lot more beef.” ♦

A FIGHT AT THE OPERA*Peter Gelb has a bold vision. Can the Met afford it?*

BY JAMES B. STEWART

On February 26, 2014, Peter Gelb, the general manager of the Metropolitan Opera, entered the Met's boardroom to address a group that included a nine-member committee of the Met orchestra, whose contracts were due to expire on July 31st. There was much to say. Seven and a half years into his tenure at the world's largest and most complex arts organization, Gelb could point to an impressive record of achievement: High-definition theatrical broadcasts of Met productions in cities around the world had brought grand opera to an audience of millions and opened a new revenue stream—\$32.1 million in the most recent fiscal year. To attract new audiences, he'd brought a roster of acclaimed directors to the Met stage and introduced fifty-four new productions, averaging seven per year—a Met record.

Yet the Met's expenses had soared. In the most recent fiscal year, 2013, they were three hundred and twenty-seven million dollars—forty-seven per cent higher than when Gelb took over. Because the box-office accounted for less than a third of revenue, the Met depended heavily on charitable contributions. Though revenue had grown by nearly fifty per cent, to three hundred and twenty-four million dollars, the company had run an operating deficit of \$2.8 million.

Despite a multiyear bull market in stocks, the Met's endowment had withered to two hundred and fifty-three million dollars, from a peak of three hundred and forty-five million in October, 2007, owing in part to annual withdrawals to fund operations. In fiscal 2013, the Met drew twenty-one million dollars from the endowment, an alarming spending rate of 8.3 per cent. In 2012, the Met had tapped the bond market to borrow a hundred million dollars. Meanwhile, attendance had fallen from ninety-two

per cent of capacity, in 2007-08, to seventy-nine per cent, in the 2012-13 season.

As Gelb faced the orchestra committee, he pulled up a PowerPoint presentation and enumerated the dismal statistics. In two to three years, he said, if nothing was done the Met could face bankruptcy. To avoid the fate of New York City Opera, which was forced to close down in 2013, he wanted sixteen-per-cent labor-cost cuts from the orchestra union and from many of the Met's fifteen other unions, the three largest of which represented the orchestra, the chorus, and the stagehands.

Jessica Phillips, a clarinetist who, at thirty-seven, had just been elected chairman of the orchestra committee—and who would play a major role in the orchestra's upcoming contract negotiations—was shocked at the mention of bankruptcy. The Met was among the world's foremost cultural institutions, backed by wealthy board members. It had survived other crises, including the Great Depression. Even if Gelb's numbers were accurate, did they justify cuts in salaries and benefits for the orchestra and other union members?

After the meeting, Phillips and the other committee members speculated about whether the problem was Gelb's management. They had heard rumors of misallocated expenses and exorbitant cost overruns, which they vowed to look into. Gelb's pay-cut demands all but insured an ugly contract dispute. "This is going to be bad," Phillips told the orchestra. "Like nothing you've ever seen."

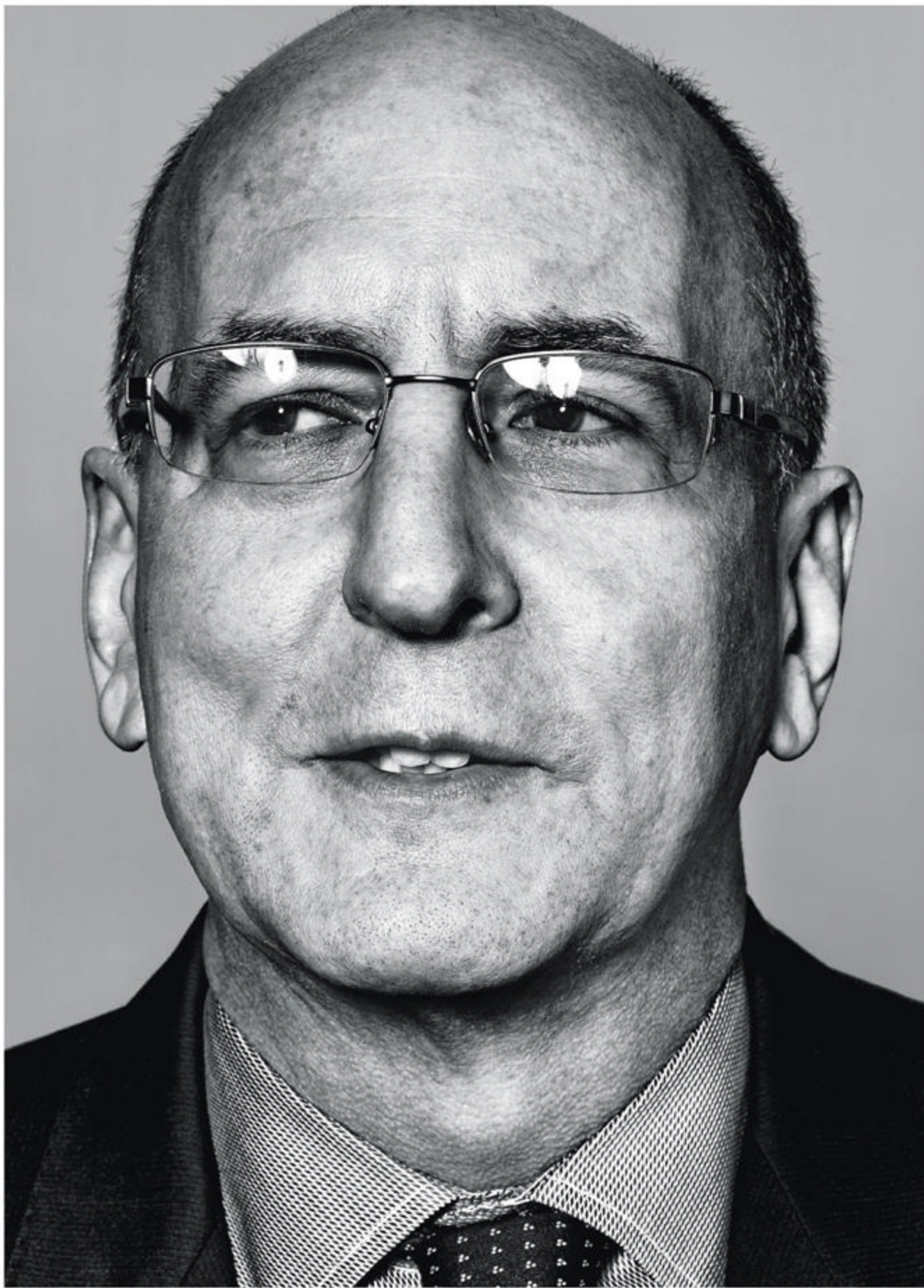
I met with Peter Gelb several times last fall in his office on the ground floor of the opera house. It is spacious but sparsely furnished, with few mementos of his career in classical music and opera and no photos of celebrity singers, conductors, or directors. We

also spoke by phone on several occasions. We'd met in passing before. (I'm a subscriber and have been a patron of the Met, on a modest scale.) Gelb was approaching his ninth season as the Met's general manager. Still youthful at sixty-one—an avid tennis player despite two hip replacements—he exudes enthusiasm for his job.

"The challenges are huge," he said. "I've always been aware that classical music and opera face an uphill struggle." The core repertoire hasn't changed much in generations, many operas last for hours, and they're mostly sung in foreign languages. Even in English, audiences need supertitles to understand the words. Top ticket prices at the Met can run four hundred and seventy-five dollars. "The audience is much smaller than it was twenty or even ten years ago," Gelb said. "We are attracting a younger audience, but they don't buy subscriptions. I have to keep us economically sound. Every night, we have to fill thirty-eight hundred seats. We're doing everything we can, but it's tough."

Gelb had never run an opera company or a nonprofit cultural institution, let alone one as large and complex as the Met. But he had deep cultural roots in New York. His father, Arthur Gelb, oversaw cultural coverage and was a renowned managing editor at the *Times*; his mother, Barbara, was the niece of the violinist Jascha Heifetz. His first job as a teen-ager had been as a part-time usher at the Met, and he worked for the classical-music impresario Sol Hurok. After dropping out of Yale, he worked in music publicity and, later, at the classical-music talent agency Columbia Artists, where he produced numerous broadcasts for "The Metropolitan Opera Presents" series on public television.

More important, he'd shown a flair for widening the audience for classical



"Every night, we have to fill thirty-eight hundred seats," Gelb says. "We're doing everything we can, but it's tough."

music. He took the Boston Symphony to China after the Cultural Revolution, arranged Vladimir Horowitz's widely publicized return to the former Soviet Union, and, as president of Sony Classical, produced a series of film soundtracks and crossover hits. "We wanted energy," William C. Morris, the chairman of the Met's executive committee, told me. "He was the strongest candidate. His mandate was to be more aggressive in promotion and marketing, bring in more producers and directors, and attract bigger and younger audiences."

Gelb is conversant in the intricate finances of the Met's operations and knowledgeable about the repertoire, but he comes most to life when talking about directors and their stage concepts. Because much of the material that the Met has to work with is from the nineteenth century—every note is circumscribed by a dead composer's intentions and, in most cases, more than a century of performance tradition—a general manager can make his mark only in creative new stagings. Were Gelb little more than a museum curator, one gets the impression that he wouldn't find the job much fun. "The one thing I know is you can't be complacent," he told me. "Just going along with things may be a way to be popular, but I've had to come at this with a missionary zeal." He has dedicated himself to bringing novel ideas to the Met's stage. "The thrill for me is seeing new productions, new singers, and how they can excite an audience," he told me. "That hasn't diminished one bit."

Gelb is not alone among opera chiefs in his approach, although the increasingly dominant role of the director in reinterpreting familiar story lines has been widely contested. The pianist András Schiff has written:

What does the director do? He thinks he has to assert himself—he understands nothing about the music, he can hardly read music (yes, I know, there are notable exceptions)—and rages that much more wildly onstage. He changes everything about the piece: the plot, the setting, the time period, and moreover regales us with sex, violence and a surfeit of tastelessness.

Gelb told me that he isn't interested

in novelty for its own sake, and chooses only directors who respect the narrative integrity of a work. But he was soon engulfed in controversy over a new production of "Tosca," which opened the 2009 season. The updated version brought the Swiss director Luc Bondy to the Met for the first time, replacing Franco Zeffirelli's sumptuous re-creation of Rome's Church of Sant'Andrea Della Valle with a dark, stripped-down set in a production that featured prostitutes and simulated sex acts onstage.

The production marked a turning point in Gelb's relationship with the board, particularly some of its older, long-standing members, who viewed themselves as guardians of Met tradition. Especially offended was James S. Marcus, an honorary director and former chairman. He and his wife, Ellen, had already taken offense when Gelb, at a dinner at the Met's Grand Tier restaurant, seemed to grow impatient and asked for the check before the Marcuses could order dessert or coffee. Marcus said the new "Tosca" was "barbaric" and told Gelb it was "the worst production I've ever seen in my life." (He subsequently gave ten million dollars to support a vocal program at Juilliard.)

Jacqueline Desmarais, one of the Met's longtime managing directors and donors, was also upset after seeing "Tosca" and confronted Gelb just before a board meeting. Desmarais is in a position to single-handedly resolve the Met's financial plight. When her husband, the Canadian financier and conglomerate head Paul Desmarais, Sr., died, in 2013, he left a fortune estimated by *Forbes* at \$4.6 billion.

At a subsequent board meeting, Desmarais raised her hand and asked, "Will I ever see the old Zeffirelli production of 'Tosca' in my lifetime?"

"The obvious answer was 'How soon do you want it?'" a board member who was present recalled. Desmarais is eighty-six. But Gelb replied that that was not the way the Met was going artistically. (Gelb does not recall the exchange.) Zeffirelli's "Tosca" remains mothballed. The controversial Bondy production will be retired after five

seasons, and a new version is in the works.

The following year, the Met opened the first parts of Wagner's "Ring" cycle, the eighth full cycle the Met has produced and the touchstone for any opera manager's career. Gelb pulled out all the stops: bringing on the Canadian director Robert Lepage, of Cirque du Soleil; incorporating elaborate scenic digital projections; and designing a forty-five-ton machine with twenty-four moving beams. To accommodate the weight of the machine, the Met stage had to be reinforced, at a cost of \$1.4 million. Overtime costs, especially for Sunday rehearsals, which are paid at double time, soared as singers waited and technicians tinkered with the set, which suffered technical failures even on opening night. Time spent on the "Ring" cut into rehearsal for other productions, pushing those, too, into costly overtime. (The company says it budgeted for the complexities of the production, including the overtime costs.) The Met has said that the "Ring" cost twenty million dollars, all paid for by a gift from Ann Ziff, the board chair. But some board members who have tried to account for the direct and indirect costs estimate that the total ran as high as forty-five million dollars.

Critics were ruthless. "Pound for pound, ton for ton, it is the most witless and wasteful production in modern operatic history," Alex Ross wrote in this magazine. The production offended musical purists and many in the Met's orchestra and chorus. The clanking of the machine interfered with Wagner's score and was distracting to the musicians and the audience.

New York opera lovers "are elegant; they're smart; they want to be transported," Jessica Phillips told me. "They love pomp and circumstance. They want the best of the best. The orchestra isn't against innovation, but the 'Ring' isn't a place where you want to take big risks."

Even some board members who appreciated Gelb's aesthetic were concerned that the elaborate stagings put the safety of musicians at risk. Deborah Voigt, in her first "Walküre" appearance as Brünnhilde, in 2011, stumbled while climbing a plank and slipped to the ground. When an elevated platform



collapsed during a performance of “Faust,” the veteran mezzo-soprano Wendy White fell eight feet. The production, directed by Des McAnuff, a Tony Award-winning stage director making his Met debut, moved the action to the atomic era. To many critics, the conceit was incomprehensible. White was hospitalized and hasn’t returned to the Met’s stage.

Phillips told me, “Peter has said over and over that the production is what’s most important.” She and others in the orchestra held a different view. “Opera is the pinnacle of art forms because it’s all three: music, singing, and staging.” She complained that the acclaimed directors Gelb hired don’t understand opera or the acoustics of the Met. They couldn’t anticipate how their productions would sound with full orchestra, or how they would affect singers. “That’s where all the friction started.”

When Gelb took over as general manager, in 2006, the Met’s endowment stood at three hundred and six million dollars, which comfortably exceeded its expenses that year. Nearly all nonprofit institutions with an endowment spend some of it each year; five per cent or less is considered prudent. But before Gelb’s arrival the board had moved to a fixed draw, rather than a percentage, in order to simplify future planning. Then, with Gelb at the helm, the board raised the amount of the draw from sixteen million to twenty-one million. The move was based on the assumption that the endowment would keep growing. Instead, its value plunged during the global financial crisis, and the large spending draw continued, exceeding five per cent and eating into the endowment’s principal. “That was a mistake,” Morris acknowledges.

Still, by 2013, it was hard to blame the Met’s financial problems solely on the financial crisis. Audiences weren’t coming back, despite the new productions and the excitement that Gelb had brought. Ticket prices went up ten per cent, and then had to be rolled back. “We were headed on a disastrous course,” Gelb told me, and he realized that he and the board would have to take action.

The Met has a history of strong-willed general managers, powerful

board chairs, and compliant board members. Some members join because they love the opera and enjoy the perks: prestige, social and business networking opportunities, and special access to stars, directors, conductors, and musicians. In return, they are expected to make substantial annual contributions—five hundred thousand dollars is the minimum expected for the highest-ranking members. Most give far more. They don’t join the board to pore over financial statements or make trouble at board meetings.

At the top of the board’s pyramid were the eleven members of the executive committee, who include Ann Ziff, the chairman; Mercedes T. Bass, the vice-chairman; Morris, the chairman of the executive committee; and Kevin W. Kennedy, the president and chief executive officer.

There are forty-three voting members, known as managing directors, followed by nine honorary directors, who attend meetings but don’t vote; forty-nine advisory directors; thirty-three members (directors); and twenty-one young associate directors—a hundred and fifty-five people in all.

Gelb met with Ziff and Kennedy at regularly scheduled meetings, and often consulted with Morris as well. Morris and Kennedy, a former Gold-

man Sachs partner who became board president in 2011, were both Wall Street veterans. (Several directors speculated that Bass has been somewhat sidelined now that her “capacity,” as it’s known in fund-raising circles, has been diminished by a divorce. Bass says her giving has actually increased.)

“I’m a businessman,” Morris told me when we met recently at his private-equity office, across from Grand Central. (A wig worn by Angela Gheorghiu as Carmen is on display in the entranceway.) “But when I first came on the board I had trouble understanding how this worked. I shock new board members when I tell them our gross margin is negative one hundred per cent—for every dollar of ticket revenue, we lose a dollar. It’s not a business. There are no shareholders. Directors of the Met are opera lovers, and the return they’re looking for is to provide what directors and opera lovers want, which is to be the best opera house in the world.”

He added, “We were having a very bad year. The board is constantly putting pressure on Peter to live within our means.”

Gelb told me that it was his idea, not the board’s, to reduce costs and seek union pay cuts. With his approval, the board formed a fifty-eight-member



“Mom! Jonah’s engaging in nation-building again!”

strategic-planning committee, which met over the spring and fall of 2013 and concluded that the Met needed to reduce costs and launch a major fund-raising campaign. But donors weren't going to give to something they considered a "bottomless pit," as Gelb put it.

And some board members were troubled by the lack of a credible long-term financial plan. Among those was the managing director Bruce Kovner, a hedge-fund magnate who has an estimated net worth of five billion dollars. He's also an avid classical-music lover (he has piano lessons from time to time with Emanuel Ax) and a generous donor.

Kovner had a series of private meetings with Gelb. He didn't quarrel with Gelb's artistic vision, but he was concerned by the mounting deficits. He stressed that if the Met's revenues and expenses weren't better aligned, the long-term viability of the Met was threatened. Kovner was especially adamant that unionized labor costs, which account for two-thirds of the Met's expenses, be curbed. (This past summer, along with several other managing directors, he offered to fund the costs of any shutdown, and the Met worked out month-by-month estimates of what a work stoppage might cost, which ran to millions of dollars.) Although Kovner had given the Met ten million dollars to help modernize its backstage operations, and has made additional annual contributions, he was reluctant to give more or assume a leadership role on the Met's board without a sounder fiscal plan.

Kovner was not the only managing director troubled by the Met's finances. Beth Glynn, a member of the finance committee who was a partner at the money-management firm Neuberger Berman, has, with her husband, Gary Glynn, endowed two orchestra chairs and donated eight million dollars to the Campaign for the Met. According to Glynn, at one committee meeting, when she asked about the opera's pension obligations, Morris interjected, saying that anyone who had been paying attention would already know the answer. Glynn rephrased the question. At a different board meeting, she asked about the employment contract of James

Levine, the Met's revered music director since 1976. Morris refused to divulge the contract's terms. The discussion became heated, with an angry Morris raising his voice—an act of incivility that shocked some committee members. (Morris denies that the incidents occurred.)

Kevin Kennedy called Glynn to make amends, but she resigned from the board in April.

Labor strife is not new at the Met, though the last work stoppage was thirty-four years ago. In 1966, threats of a strike nearly derailed the opening of the Met's new opera house at Lincoln Center. There were management-led lockouts in 1969 and again in 1980, leading to truncated seasons and a disastrous plunge in ticket revenue. But, for all the often contentious negotiations, the Met's unionized employees had not agreed to a pay cut in decades.

The previous round of contract talks, in 2011, had been handled, as they had for most of the previous twenty-eight years, by Joseph Volpe, who had been kept on as a paid consultant after leaving the general manager's post. Despite periods of strain, Volpe had earned the unions' trust. A former master carpenter at the Met who rose through the ranks, he was the first general manager to have been a union member. There'd been no strike or lockout during his tenure. (One of Volpe's sons is the master electrician at the Met.)

As is often the case with strong-willed leaders and their successors, Gelb and Volpe had never really gotten along. Years earlier, they had clashed while Gelb was working as a TV producer at the Met, and Volpe had once threatened to throw Gelb across Lincoln Plaza. Although Volpe hadn't stood in the way of Gelb's appointment, he subsequently chafed under what he saw as Gelb's gratuitous public criticisms of his tenure.

On January 16, 2014, the Met announced that Gelb would replace Volpe as the head of the negotiations, after the two had clashed over strategy and plans for deep cuts. Whether Volpe quit or was fired is a matter of interpretation (Volpe still receives payment from the Met in return for being

available for consultation). Gelb hired Howard Robbins, who advised the National Hockey League owners during their 2012-13 lockout of the Players' Association, as the Met's labor lawyer. Robbins's name is synonymous with tough management.

The message wasn't lost on the orchestra. In February, after Jessica Phillips had been elected head of the orchestra committee, she was performing as part of the onstage band in a dress rehearsal of Berg's "Wozzeck." Gelb was watching. Afterward, he shook her hand and said lightheartedly, "I don't know whether I should offer congratulations or condolences."

Unlike most musicians, Phillips earned a degree in political science, from Barnard, before studying at the Manhattan School of Music. Her husband and her mother are lawyers, and she often consulted them. She'd studied a history of Met labor negotiations written by Sandor Balint, a violinist and longtime chairman of the negotiating committee, who joined the orchestra in 1956, when orchestra members played seven performances a week and had no health insurance, sick pay, pension, or job security.

In response to Gelb's pay-cut demands, Phillips and the orchestra's lawyers and advisers offered to freeze salaries and benefits, but Gelb rejected the offer. Phillips's committee began preparing for a strike or a lockout. She advised orchestra members that they needed at least fifteen weeks' pay in liquid assets, to cover the seven weeks between the contract-expiration date and opening night, in September, and the first eight weeks of the season. That was a month longer than the lockout in 1980 had lasted. They formed a public-relations and social-media committee and made plans for concerts to raise money and to reach out to other orchestras. (In 2013, Met musicians sent financial aid to members of the Minnesota Orchestra during their fifteen-and-a-half-month lockout.)

On May 15th, the Met issued a statement defending its demand for union pay cuts. It noted that in fiscal year 2013 the average annual cost of pay and benefits for a regular full-time

chorus member was three hundred thousand dollars and for a regular full-time orchestra member two hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars. The statement didn't mention the stagehands' pay, because their union leadership had given Gelb the impression that they would be amenable to cuts. The top three stagehands earned more than four hundred and fifty thousand each. (In April, in a gesture of good faith, Gelb had cut his own pay ten per cent, to \$1.4 million.)

But the disclosure of the seemingly high salaries for that year was deemed misleading by the orchestra and chorus members. "We did seven overtime operas that year, which is unheard of," Phillips said. "Peter chose to do the 'Ring,' 'Les Troyens,' 'Don Carlo,' and 'Parsifal'—all multi-hour epics—"in the same season. That hadn't been done in the thirty years for which we had records. This inflated our salaries, and then it was used against us."

The unions countered that the base pay for an orchestra musician was just under a hundred and sixty thousand dollars, and for chorus members it was a hundred and four thousand dollars. (The Met had stated that the average salary was two hundred thousand for both groups.) Average Met orchestra salaries are the highest in the United States, but not when adjusted for the cost of living in the New York City area.

The Met's memo also placed its financial hardships within the context of a broader problem: "As the global audience for opera continues to decline, the last year has seen the demise of New York City Opera and the collapse of other opera companies in the US and abroad." That assertion offended the musicians, since the notion of a "global decline" of opera was unsubstantiated by any hard statistics. Most union members in both the orchestra and the chorus put the onus on Gelb, citing financial mismanagement.

The chorus union had already staked out a hard line. Once they learned of the proposed cuts, they refused to meet with Gelb in the opera house and insisted on neutral territory. (They chose the Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse, across from the opera house.) The members lashed out at Gelb. "They said they'd destroy me, make my life miserable," he

recalled. "I was uneasy, but I didn't really believe them."

In an e-mail to Gelb on May 28th, Alan Gordon, the executive director of the American Guild of Musical Artists, which represents the chorus, the principal singers, the dancers, and the production staff at the opera, went directly at him: "Actually, the cost reductions the Met needs to adopt are

The orchestra-committee members interviewed their backstage colleagues. The stagehands described one set—a field of red poppies in a new production of "Prince Igor"—that required multiple trucks for transit to storage facilities, causing transport and storage costs to soar. (The Met said that there was nothing "exceptional" about the transportation costs.) In "La Sonnambula," petals



Michael Mayer's *Rat Pack "Rigoletto,"* updated to the Las Vegas of the nineteen-sixties.

reductions in your run-away, unregulated spending and excessive draws on the endowment." The failure of New York City Opera was the result of a "nonsense business plan imposed by the management" and "similar out of control spending." The union would cooperate, Gordon wrote, only if Gelb accepted some measures of union oversight, "to control your astronomically increased spending" and "to reverse the waste, excess and extravagance that have thus far been the hallmark of your current administration."

Orchestra members, too, had considered demanding Gelb's ouster. But to disprove Gelb's thesis Phillips believed that the orchestra union, Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians, needed more information.

that dropped from a bridge were purple; someone wanted them changed to white. They were changed. Then they were changed back to purple. In a dimly lit 2007 production of "Peter Grimes," Gelb ordered the chorus to make multiple costume changes, each of which incurred additional charges under the work rules and added up to more than a hundred thousand dollars. One person involved in "Peter Grimes" told me, "They changed from one set of gray rags into another set of gray rags." Individually, none of these incidents amounted to much—Gelb said that the petals, for example, cost no more than fifty dollars—but the orchestra representatives argued that they indicated a pattern of management indifference to costs.

Gelb maintains that orchestra and

chorus members haven't been privy to the sometimes intense arguments he's had with directors over costs. "I've brought in a lot of directors with great artistic vision, but we're constantly cutting them back," he said. "I'm in the auditorium every day to make them feel loved and supported despite the cuts."

Sir Richard Eyre, who directed a new production of "Carmen" in 2010 and the 2014 opening-night production of "The Marriage of Figaro," said, "Gelb did rein me in." The budget for his production of "Carmen" was cut substantially after the financial crisis. "It's not an open checkbook," Eyre said. "I can't speak for other directors, but in my experience I haven't found any profligacy."

He added that Gelb's critics don't seem to accept that opera is not just music but musical theatre. "The glorious thing about theatre is the stage," he said. "All the energy has to go to the event onstage. Peter understands that and is hands-on in the production. He's the only director in my experience who attends every technical rehearsal and dress rehearsal."

Phillips's committee members also pored over hundreds of reviews. They calculated that more than sixty per cent of two hundred and seventy reviews of Gelb's fifty-four new productions in the past eight years were negative. (Phillips was pleased to note that the orchestra drew praise in 81.5 per cent.)

After repeated union demands, the Met turned over internal box-office data for every production. Most of Gelb's productions sold well during their opening seasons, even obscure operas like Rossini's "Le Comte Ory" and Shostakovich's "The Nose." But operas typically recoup their costs only after long runs, and productions are usually expected to be revived many times and last ten years or longer. Negative reviews and bad word-of-mouth can be financially ruinous for revivals, and in many cases ticket sales of Gelb-era revivals plunged.

This was especially evident with the "Ring" cycle. During the 2008-09 season, for the last production of the "Ring" directed by Otto Schenk, the Met filled nearly ninety-five per cent of the seats.

MY 1985

I wasn't a math star, but one or two of my new friends were.
I liked to work into casual conversation

fusillades of words like nexus and tensor.
The counsellor from the department of recreation

said I had the voice of an angry thirty-year-old.
I thought I had a "penetrating gaze";

kids thought I was staring at them. I had to be told.
After that, I imagined I lived on the moon for two days;

I stood out and hid there, a demented sentry
from an awkwarder parallel world, a young Bizarro.

On our class trip to the beach and the World of Tomorrow,
the boys were igneous. I was sedimentary:

I set out to lie with the other girls on the low dunes
before the morning heat got metamorphic.

They folded their towels and moved off, so I closed my
eyes
on the hypothesis that it would make me calmer.

In the talent show, I played piano for Annabelle's show
tunes
(we rehearsed extra for passages marked "improvise"),

then sang "Take a Pebble" by Emerson, Lake and Palmer.
They thought I was caterwauling. I thought I was Orphic.

—Stephen Burt

For the première season of the Lepage version, in 2010, the results were comparable. But the 2012-13 season's revival sold only seventy per cent of seats. Average revenue for the "Ring" revival in 2012-13 was less than sixty per cent of what would have come in had all tickets sold at list price.

Some of Gelb's new productions fared even worse: Berlioz's "La Damnation de Faust" (also directed by Lepage) dropped from ninety-three per cent of potential revenue to fifty-eight per cent; Rossini's "Armida" from ninety-one per cent to fifty-six per cent; "Le Comte Ory" from ninety-five per cent to forty-six per cent; "The Nose" from ninety-four per cent to fifty-four per cent; and the controversial "Tosca" from ninety-six per cent to seventy-two per cent.

Some standards of the repertoire did well—"La Traviata," "Madama Butterfly," and Michael Mayer's Rat Pack production of "Rigoletto," set in the Las Vegas of the nineteen-sixties—but they were just three of the fifty-four new productions.

Ticket buyers were still flocking to pre-Gelb standbys like the acclaimed 2004 Julie Taymor production of "The Magic Flute" (including an abridged, family-friendly English-language version undertaken by Gelb); "Aida," a twenty-six-year-old production by Sonja Frisell; and "La Bohème," dating from 1981, one of the last Zeffirelli productions not targeted for replacement and among the best-selling shows ever mounted at the Met. Gelb told me that "La Bohème" and "Aida" are "always the

most popular operas.” He added, “They would be if we had new productions, too,” although “I think I’d be lynched if I tried to replace Zeffirelli’s ‘La Bohème.’”

The orchestra also noted that major European opera houses were selling ninety-five to a hundred per cent of capacity (the latter in the case of the Vienna State Opera). All are heavily subsidized by taxpayers, unlike the Met, but London’s Royal Opera, which gets a relatively modest government subsidy, also sold ninety-five per cent of capacity. (Gelb pointed out that those houses are all smaller than the Met.) In the United States, the musicians cited financially successful seasons in Houston, Dallas, St. Louis, and Seattle, although none of them have the ambitious full-year schedule of the Met or support full-time orchestras and choruses.

Alex Beard, the chief executive at the Royal Opera, told the *Guardian*, “I don’t want to get into a slagging match with the Met, but that is just so far from our experience. Opera is on a roll. As long as love, death, longing and despair are part of the life experience, and people want to hear great stories told through music, opera has a vibrant future.”

Phillips believed the numbers were so patently damning that she had to get them into the hands of the board members, few of whom she had ever met. She and her colleagues compiled the data into a detailed package that concluded with nine proposals to reduce costs by thirty-one million dollars a year without cutting orchestra and chorus salaries and benefits. They hand-delivered them to board members’ residences and offices.

On June 20th, the Met dashed the orchestra’s hopes with a full-page “Open Letter to Opera Lovers” in the *Times*, signed by twelve prominent board members. It ignored the orchestra’s arguments and reiterated the case for cuts, while also praising “our imaginative and hardworking General Manager Peter Gelb.”

Beth Glynn’s departure was the most visible sign of board dissent, but some other directors, uncomfortable speaking up at meetings, communicated their displeasure privately. “There were hard-line directors who said we

should be tougher on the unions, but some said they just wanted a season,” Morris said. Among the most critical of Gelb were several honorary directors who have long histories with the Met and wield considerable influence, even though they don’t vote.

The honorary director Lawrence Lovett, an heir to the Piggly-Wiggly supermarket fortune and an amateur musician who lives in Monte Carlo, said that forty-four years ago, when he joined the board, and Rudolf Bing was general manager, “it was a group of distinguished people in their fields who also were knowledgeable about and loved music. It was not about money, although there were many wealthy people on the board. The administrators came to board meetings and sat behind Mr. Bing, and we could question them and disagree if we felt like it. Now you just listen to Mr. Gelb.”

“It used to be very collegial,” Judy Laughlin, an honorary director who was a vice-president at the Met for fifteen years, told me. She is married to an heir of the Mellon banking fortune. “We all knew one another, and we’d sit down and talk things out. And we didn’t go bankrupt. Now it’s all about money.”

The largest donors continue to staunchly support Gelb. Morris, who gave fourteen million dollars to the Met’s last campaign, told me, “I wouldn’t be very optimistic about the future of the Met if we didn’t have Peter Gelb working for us sixteen hours a day.”

As for the orchestra’s presentation, “I didn’t find it either well informed or persuasive,” Morris said. The Met produced an annotated version of the report in rebuttal. It noted that data from the seven years before Gelb also showed a mixed bag of critical reception for new productions and steep fall-off for revivals after their initial seasons. Many revivals of productions that preceded Gelb’s arrival did better under his leadership than they had under Volpe’s, thanks to better casting and promotion, according to the Met. Kennedy, the Met’s chief executive, made personal calls to board members to shore up support.

Meanwhile, several disgruntled di-

rectors prodded the former chairman James Marcus to speak up, and he came to the June board meeting armed with a written list of questions. The first was whether the Met had fully examined the potential financial consequences of a lockout or a strike. Marcus noted that the opera’s experience in 1980 had proved expensive in both the short and the long term, and that many subscribers, once the habit of attending was broken, never returned. Before the Met delayed or cancelled its season, he thought that the board should have a clear idea of the likely financial impact.

Marcus felt that Gelb didn’t really answer that question or others. “He was partly responsive to about half the questions, and the others he just ignored,” Marcus told me. “That was that.” (Another board member said that Gelb listened patiently to Marcus’s “angry diatribe,” answered his questions, and added that the issues had already been considered.)

Phillips and her colleagues made their case to the media and to City Hall, where they were warmly received by Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer. They felt that they were making progress. Later that month, Mayor Bill de Blasio called Gelb, urging him to hold off any lockout. But on July 23rd, a week before the contracts expired, Gelb sent a letter to the orchestra and the other unions that said, “Please plan for the likelihood of a work stoppage beginning Aug. 1.” He added,

“I sincerely hope to avoid such an unfortunate event.” The Met also warned that, should the lockout happen, the cafeteria would be closed and that health-insurance coverage would be suspended.

The chorus union’s director, Alan Gordon, predicted “zero” chance of a settlement before the contracts expired, on the thirty-first, telling the *Times*, “Once he locks out employees, his relationship with the performers at the Met is over. They will never respect him again. He’ll be the captain of a ship where the crew is just waiting for a chance to mutiny.”

On Wednesday morning, July 30th, as the deadline approached and there



was no movement on either side, Bruce Simon, the lawyer for the chorus union, raised the possibility of extending the negotiations. Gelb seized the opening to propose using a federal mediator, and both the chorus and the orchestra agreed. In a first for labor negotiations at the Met, the two unions decided to work together, with Simon representing both.

The next morning, the mediator, a labor lawyer and former ballet dancer named Allison Beck, boarded a train from Washington, D.C. While she was en route, the *Times* posted an editorial by Eleanor Randolph, "Keep the Met Open." Randolph wrote, "The message to the Met's management is crucial: don't lock out the talent, represented by the unions. Don't shorten the season or rattle the opera lovers or scare away donors who spend a great deal of money and time sustaining the excellence of New York's great opera house." Phillips was elated. She spent the afternoon doing radio and TV interviews.

Gelb continued to negotiate separately with the stagehands' union, Local 1 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees. He figured that if he could settle first with the stagehands, the others would have to follow. But on the night of the thirty-first, when the stagehands asked for Gelb's "last and best" offer, it became clear that each side had badly misjudged the other. Gelb's offer still contained a substantial pay cut. The stagehands were shocked, and at 9:30 P.M. they walked out.

When Phillips met the mediator, she liked Allison Beck immediately. "We were two women in this boys' club," she said. Phillips told Beck that she feared a lockout would irreparably damage the Met. Beck met with Gelb and his lawyer and proposed a seventy-two-hour extension, which would give her time to absorb both sides' positions. In the wake of the *Times* editorial and the collapse of the Local 1 talks, Gelb agreed to extend the deadline. At 11:30 P.M., Phillips e-mailed the orchestra, "You will have health insurance for the entire month of August. You will get paid for the rest of the week."

The next day, August 1st, Phillips gave Beck the orchestra's report, telling her that they didn't trust Gelb or believe that the information given by the Met was accurate. Bruce Simon suggested bringing in an independent financial expert to examine the Met's books and prepare an evaluation.

The negotiators recruited Eugene Keilin, an opera lover and Met donor who, as the head of the Municipal Assistance Corporation, had helped save New York City from bankruptcy in the nineteen-seventies. Keilin "radiates integrity," Phillips told me. Still, some union members were wary. If this widely respected financial authority agreed with Gelb and the board that union pay cuts were needed, the unions would lose ground.

Keilin joined the negotiations on Saturday. In the afternoon, he sat down with Gelb and Bruce Simon. That evening, Gelb and Simon hammered out another extension of the deadline, to give Keilin time for his report.

On August 3rd, Phillips and her committee spent three hours going over their findings with Keilin. He told Simon that it was one of the best labor presentations he'd seen in forty years. The orchestra demanded greater financial oversight, regular access to books and records, other spending cuts, and more transparency from the board.

The rest of the week, Keilin continued his discussions with both sides, and it became clear that his report would come down somewhere in the middle, with potentially damaging disclosures that would only undermine public confidence in the opera. At a dinner, Gelb and Simon settled on potential pay cuts for union members, equal cuts for management, further cuts to operating expenses, and oversight of Gelb.

On Saturday morning, August 16th, everyone gathered in the Met's boardroom to hear the terms. It was the first time Gelb had sat down with the chorus and orchestra leaders since formally threatening the lockout. He looked exhausted. Gelb apologized for the necessity of cuts but said that the Met's financial plight left him no alternative.

He laid out the terms of a deal. The union leaders weren't happy—they would have to tell their members that

they'd agreed to the first significant pay cuts in decades. But they acknowledged that cuts had to be made to "save the Met." Phillips said, "We were getting a lot of what we wanted," especially more transparency and oversight. For another forty-eight hours, the two sides haggled over the details. Gelb again threatened to lock out the unions. Some last-minute sticking points were resolved over another dinner with Simon. At 6 A.M. on August 18th, Phillips and the orchestra and chorus union leaders agreed to a new four-year contract. (Two days later, a deal was also struck with the stagehands' union.)

The orchestra and chorus agreed to pay cuts: for the orchestra, 3.5 per cent effective immediately, another 3.5 per cent six months later—a little less than half of the sixteen per cent Gelb first asked for.

The complicated work rules could not be renegotiated under such time pressure, and the orchestra and chorus fiercely resisted any changes. Gelb agreed to cut \$11.25 million of the Met's expenses, in addition to management pay cuts. He also agreed to keep on Keilin to monitor the Met's financial performance. Gelb could take this proposal back to the board and ask for more donations.

When Phillips got home, she burst into tears. She felt she'd let down her fellow-musicians. "I was devastated," she said. She felt terrible about the concessions. She slept until ten, then took calls from the press. "People said this was extraordinary," she said. "That's when it dawned on me that this was unlike any labor agreement ever. We were willing to take cuts, but it was unprecedented that we'd gain oversight."

No one has suggested that the new contracts will solve the Met's financial plight. All told, the Met has estimated that the union agreement and management cuts would save eighty-four million dollars over the next four years. Assuming an annual budget of three hundred and twenty-five million dollars, that represents a cost reduction of about 6.5 per cent per year.

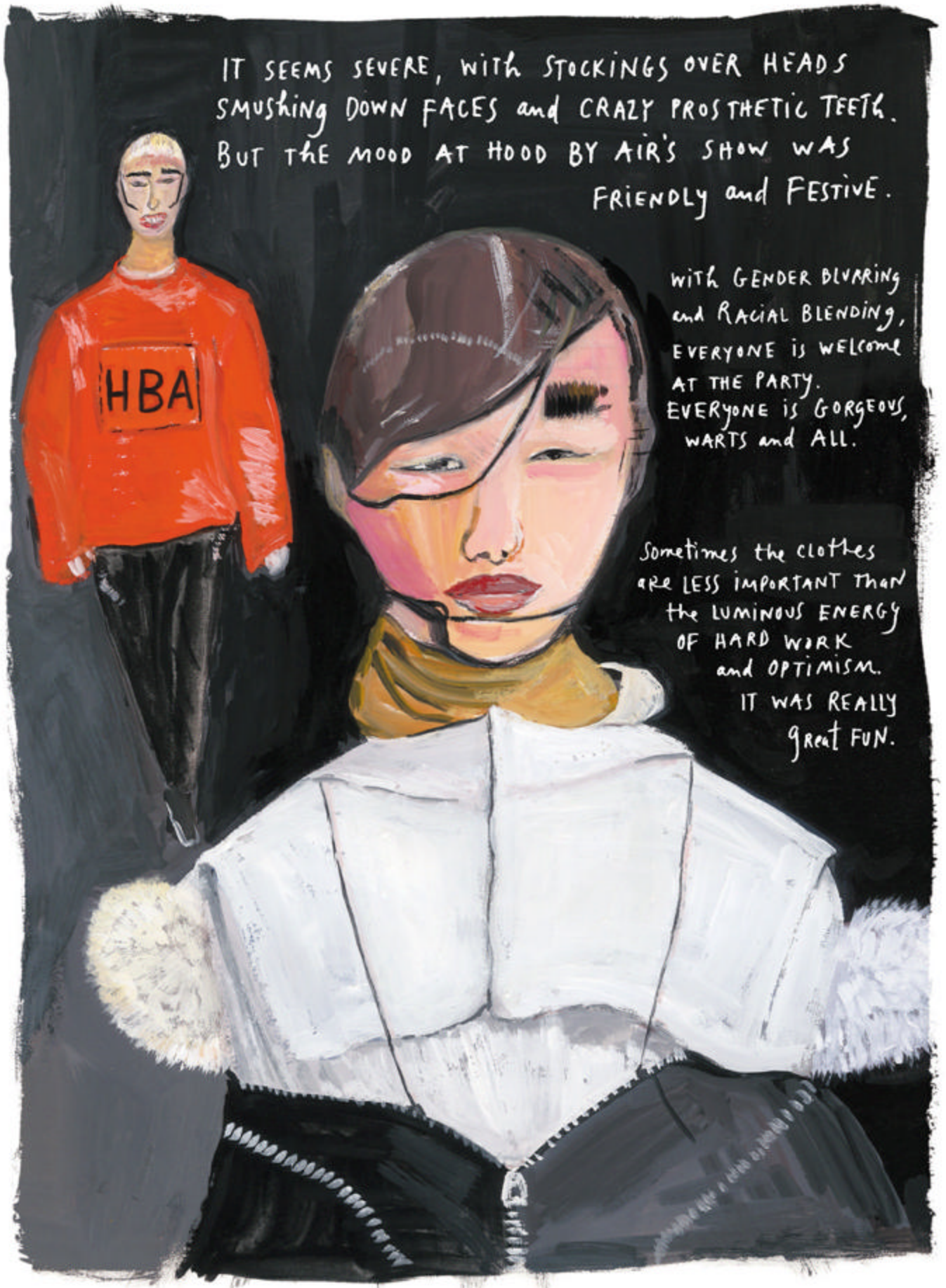
That doesn't take into account the Met's legal fees, which were surely substantial. Though some directors felt

IT SEEMS SEVERE, WITH STOCKINGS OVER HEADS
SMUSHING DOWN FACES and CRAZY PROSTHETIC TEETH.
BUT THE MOOD AT HOOD BY AIR'S SHOW WAS
FRIENDLY and FESTIVE.

WITH GENDER BLUARING
and RACIAL BLENDING,
EVERYONE IS WELCOME
AT THE PARTY.
EVERYONE IS GORGEOUS,
WARTS and ALL.

Sometimes the clothes
are LESS IMPORTANT than
the LUMINOUS ENERGY
OF HARD WORK
and OPTIMISM.

IT WAS REALLY
great FUN.



that the Met should have obtained more concessions, Morris told me that he's convinced it was the best deal possible under the circumstances. No one wanted to see the house go dark.

A few weeks after the settlement, Gelb and Phillips had dinner at Jean-Georges on Columbus Circle. Phillips told him that morale was still low, and he asked what he could do. She stressed that the orchestra was willing to help with donors, education efforts, and public outreach. She proposed open orchestra rehearsals that board members could attend. Gelb seemed amenable. But even then he managed to stir up resentments. He cancelled a Sirius Radio broadcast of the orchestra's upcoming concert at Carnegie Hall, despite the fact that James Levine offered to pay the twenty-thousand-dollar cost from his own pocket. Phillips said the orchestra had always viewed those concerts as a way to attract new audiences. Gelb told her that the board had questioned the need for any Carnegie concerts at all. "Then you have a problem with your board, because these concerts are good for everybody," Phillips replied.

The season's opening night, on September 23rd, featured a new production of "The Marriage of Figaro" by Richard Eyre. Eyre had spoken of fiscal restraint, but there were problems with his set, a rotating structure of bronze tracery suggesting the Moorish architecture of Seville, where the story takes place. (The action is updated from the eighteenth century to the nineteen-thirties.) A fire inspector concluded that the set material was highly inflammable, so the Met had to station a fire truck in the loading dock, at a cost of twenty-five hundred dollars per performance. (The Met said that this is a common practice, including at Broadway theatres.)

Worse, from the orchestra's point of view, the set compromised the music. At one rehearsal, Eyre insisted that the designer had assured him the material would reflect sound. But the set was porous, and much sound vanished into the back of the stage. The prompter box, normally at the front of center stage, had

been moved into the orchestra pit. The conductor, Levine, discovered that the placement of the box bifurcated the orchestra, and players couldn't see each other. Gelb initially refused to move it, on the ground that it wouldn't fit into the set. Levine insisted, and it was returned to the stage.

The incident reinforced the orchestra's conviction that Gelb cares more about staging than music. Relations between Gelb and Levine are said to have been tense ever since, but both men insist that they have a good working relationship.

Meanwhile, Gelb's continued efforts at cost-cutting alienated Old Guard board members. After Gelb laid off Sissy Strauss, a longtime artist liaison who took care of visiting singers and threw an annual star-studded Christmas party, Lovett, the honorary director living in Monte Carlo, fired off an angry letter to Kennedy and Ziff:

I am among those truly loyal to the Met and who have hopes that an upward course will soon be found to reverse the Gelb descent, artistic and financial (expenses and ticket prices are the only things going upwards). Any business would have long ago gone to the bottom and found what was wrong—the general manager—and got rid of him. His business plan continues to fail, and the board continues to support it.

In November, the Met released its preliminary results for the fiscal year that ended July 31st: an operating deficit of twenty-two million dollars—a record in absolute terms and, as a percentage of the operating budget, the largest in thirty years. Most of the loss was accounted for by a drop in contributions from major donors.

Gelb told the board in January that attendance was stabilizing this season at about seventy per cent of capacity. By mid-February, box-office revenue was running about two million dollars behind budget. Whatever the artistic and political merits of "The Death of Klinghoffer," the controversial opera by John Adams about the murder by Palestinian terrorists of a Jewish passenger on a cruise ship, it sold seventy-four per cent of capacity—not bad for a contemporary opera but a dismal turnout

for a new production. Some revivals of Gelb productions have fared worse. A performance of "Les Contes d'Hoffmann" sold just forty-six per cent. "Don Giovanni" and "La Traviata" sold seventy per cent and seventy-three per cent, respectively, which is low for such stalwarts of the repertoire. Attendance at pre-Gelb-era standbys has also faltered this season. The Met said that attendance at Taymor's full-length "Magic Flute" averaged just sixty-one per cent; at Zeffirelli's "La Bohème" it was seventy-eight per cent. Despite the weak box-office results, Gelb said the Met is on course to have a balanced budget this year, thanks to cost cuts and increased fund-raising, including funds for the new campaign. Cost cutting and fund-raising have their limits, though. As the Met has put it, "The level of giving simply cannot continue to grow faster than our rising costs."

"You can't continue with a very weak box-office when opera houses all over the world are filling their seats," Bruce Crawford, an honorary director and former general manager and president, said. Bruce Kovner said, "I adore the Met, and it's one of the great cultural institutions in music and the world. I want to see it succeed. But I want it to do better than it is, especially on its finances."

Last year, the Met had to draw down seventeen million of its thirty-million-dollar line of credit and, to renew it, had to pledge a security interest in the two Chagall murals at the front of the opera house—"The Sources of Music" and "The Triumph of Music." That leaves only thirteen million dollars. In December, Moody's Investors Service downgraded the Met's bond rating, citing its "weakened financial profile" and "deep operating deficit" leading to "a marked decline in unrestricted liquidity." In February, Bank of America agreed to extend the Met's credit line only after it agreed to pledge two Maillol bronzes, "L'Été" and "Venus Without Arms," on display on the Grand Tier.

The piecemeal pledging of the Met's tangible assets has contributed to a sense of financial desperation, even as artistic standards remain high. "The musical quality is superb," Crawford



said. "It's hard to fault that. And the fund-raising has been in great shape. It's everything else that's a problem. Cash flow is a huge problem."

"The Met has way too small of an endowment compared to the budget," Ann Ziff said. "It's difficult to find donors who don't need to have their names on something who will build the endowment. That's tough. It's not sexy to give to an endowment."

Gelb has proposed, and the board has embraced, a six-hundred-million-dollar fund-raising campaign, which earmarks three hundred million for the endowment, sixty-four million for desperately needed capital improvements to the opera house, and two hundred and thirty-six million for operations. The goal is a sustainable spending rate of five per cent of the endowment, which would generate an additional fifteen million annually; this would put the opera on better financial footing and silence many of Gelb's critics.

But in January Gelb told the board and union representatives that, so far, in the "quiet phase" of the campaign, he had raised sixty million dollars, which falls far short of the three hundred million typically required before launching such an ambitious public campaign. (The amount now stands at seventy million.) How much of that ends up in the endowment remains to be seen. Included in the seventy million is a recent gift of eleven million in cash from Morris, much of which is going toward current operating costs. The board secretary, Judith-Ann Corrente, gave ten million and was named the campaign co-chair after Mercedes Bass, who led the previous two campaigns, declined to lead this one.

Ziff pledged fifteen million. "I completely stand behind Peter's vision," she told me. "So often when somebody comes into so solidly established an organization as the Met, which is the largest in the world, and has such a different vision, people get jealous, and they resist change. They don't like it. They don't want him to succeed. They speak in a derogatory way."

Some board members told me that they remain reluctant to make any more donations until they see fundamental changes in the board's governance and in Gelb's leadership.



"Wait. Let me have one more try."

• •

Kennedy, the board president and chief executive, was also seen as a potential major donor. (He and his wife, Karen, have given nearly thirty-eight million dollars in the past.) But on March 6th, after the executive committee met by telephone, Morris informed directors that Kennedy would relinquish his post in May, leave the executive committee, and be nominated as an honorary director. The executive committee voted that Corrente be nominated to replace him.

In Morris's e-mail to directors, Kennedy was quoted praising Gelb's leadership. Several directors told me they were shocked by Kennedy's departure and worried about the loss of someone with his financial expertise. When I reached Kennedy by phone, he said he had no comment. One person who spoke to him said that he was "worn out" by the labor negotiations and had decided to step down last fall, after the settlement.

Whatever the outcome of the fund-raising campaign, Gelb said he's adapting to a prolonged period of fiscal austerity. He told me that he is "watching every penny," and finding savings both large (delaying a revival of "The Ring"; reducing the average number of annual productions from twenty-six to twenty-

four) and small (substituting cheaper costumes for singers who "cover" roles and are rarely seen onstage). "I'm willing to learn and change if change is what's needed," he said.

Still, Gelb's vision for the Met seems unshaken. When I asked him which of the budget cuts had caused him the most pain, he said it was having to reduce the number of new productions from seven to six. "Six is the minimum," he said. "Other top companies are doing more, and Paris is doing ten. With new productions, you get on the front page of the culture section. Revivals get much less attention."

Even so, the Met can't sustain many more twenty-two-million-dollar annual operating deficits. Many of the people I interviewed worry that neither Gelb nor anyone on the board seems to have a backup plan. As one board director told me, "There is no Plan B."

When I asked Morris what the Met board would do if Gelb's strategy doesn't work over the next few years, he said, "We're going to keep producing opera as long as we have the means. If those means decline, the quality will decline. And if the means aren't there we will no longer be putting on opera." ♦



PORTFOLIO

TWENTY-ONE DRESSES

BY JESSAMYN HATCHER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY PARI DUKOVIC

One of Hortense Mitchell Acton's Callot Soeurs gowns in the Camera Verde of Villa La Pietra. The gold and silver lace at the neck, the apron



skirt, and the five metallic rosettes across the chest recall the forms of a Gothic cathedral. The sleeves are made of metallic lace, now oxidized.

A number of years ago, a young painting conservator entered a forgotten storeroom in a fifteenth-century Florentine villa and stumbled on a pile of Louis Vuitton steamer trunks. She opened them and discovered a collection of exquisite dresses, the kind usually seen only in movies, or inside protective vitrines in museums. Closer inspection revealed silk labels, hand-woven with the name “Callot Soeurs.”

In the second volume of “Remembrance of Things Past,” the Narrator asks his beloved, Albertine, “Is there a vast difference between a Callot dress and one from any ordinary shop?” Her response: “Why, an enormous difference, my little man!”

A “Callot dress” is one that was made by the Paris haute-couture house Callot Soeurs—Callot Sisters. The sisters are not much remembered now: there has been no monograph on their work, and no retrospective. Yet, not long after Callot Soeurs opened their atelier, in 1895, they became one of the great names in Belle Époque fashion. Madeleine Vionnet, one of the most influential and radical designers of the twentieth century, was the sisters’ head seamstress. She ranked them higher than the self-proclaimed King of Fashion, Paul Poiret. “Without the example of the Callot Soeurs,” Vionnet said, “I would have continued to make Fords. It is because of them that I have been able to make Rolls-Royces.”

Few dresses made by Callot Soeurs have survived. So when the cache of some twenty gowns was found moldering in the trunks in the villa, it was a major discovery. The villa was La Pietra, built by a Medici banker and bought, in 1907, by Hortense Mitchell Acton, a Chicago heiress, who was the wife of Arthur Acton, an Anglo-Italian antique dealer. Their son, Sir Harold Acton, the Oxford memoirist,



An orange silk dress with silk and metallic fringe, in the garden of La Pietra. Hortense



Mitchell Acton likely wore it at one of the extravagant parties she hosted there, among the Actons' collection of sculpture.



In an era when the finance of fashion was dominated by men, Callot Soeurs combined their talent as couturiers with a flair for business.



Inside each dress are thousands of stitches, perfectly formed, yet as individual as handwriting.

historian, and aesthete, bequeathed the estate to New York University, in the nineteen-nineties.

The Callot Soeurs gowns found in the trunks belonged to Hortense Mitchell Acton, and are being shown for the first time in the photographs here. The collection is one of the most important archives of the couturiers in the world, and one of unusual breadth: Acton was a faithful client, purchasing the sisters' designs from the moment they opened their doors, on the Rue Taitbout, until the demise of the label, in the thirties. The gowns reveal the lightness and the complexity of the Callots' designs, their innovation and craftsmanship, their understanding of materials (including their fondness for lace and lamé, which they were among the first to use), and their Orientalism. Like visual artists of the time, they drew on a storehouse of geographical references.

There were four sisters to begin with—Marie, Marthe, Régina, and Joséphine—but in 1897 Joséphine committed suicide. In 1916, American *Vogue* dubbed the sisters the Three Fates, and declared them "foremost among the powers that rule the destinies of a woman's life and increase the income of France." Early Paris couture was dominated by male businessmen, but Callot Soeurs "proudly announced the fact that it was a female enterprise with the inclusion of the word 'Soeurs' in their label," the fashion historian Camille Janbon writes. In 1900, they were featured at the Paris World's Fair. That year, they had a staff of two hundred and did two million francs in sales. By 1901, they had tripled their workforce and doubled their sales.

The sisters were attuned to the era's changing aesthetic possibilities for women. They were among the first to reject the corset and to look beyond the West for dress constructions that favored mobility and a fluidity of line. A Callot gown—recalling a sari, a qipao, or a djellabah—can read like a map of French colonial projects supplemented with an inset of Japan.

Hortense Acton, with La Pietra as her lavish stage set, wore her Callot Soeurs gowns to entertain; her parties drew everyone from Gertrude Stein and Sergei Diaghilev to Winston Churchill. When the Fascists came to power, in the twenties,



Made of silk velvet, and embroidered with blue silk, this dress suffered from being stored beneath a gown with “glass-bead disease.”



Hortense Mitchell Acton commissioned handmade shoes from André Perugia, in Paris, to pair with her Callot Soeurs dresses.

most of Florence's expatriates packed up and left. Although Hortense urged her husband to follow suit, he insisted on staying put, content to cozy up to anyone—including Fascists—for the sake of his house and his collections.

In 1940, the police arrived at Villa La Pietra. Hortense Acton was put in jail, and the villa and its contents were confiscated. Eventually, both Actons escaped to Switzerland. Protected by the servants, perhaps, or overlooked in the vast sea of other loot, the trunks of dresses survived. When Hortense died, at ninety, in 1962, her gowns were still locked away.

Today, the dresses live on the villa's fourth floor, in a room that has been refitted as a textile-conservation laboratory, in conservator's boxes that resemble coffins. They demand enormous care. Costanza Perrone Da Zara and Claudia Beyer, conservators hired by N.Y.U., take several of them out of their boxes each year. The gowns are in good condition for garments this old. But the diversity of the materials Callot Soeurs employed makes them challenging to preserve. The sequins on two dresses are plagued by "inherent vice"—a degradation of cellulose nitrate. These gowns appear to be melting. Another was stored beneath a dress afflicted with "glass-bead disease." The chemicals in the beads leached into the mauve fabric of the other dress, ringing it with nebulas faded to magenta. On yet another, tiny satin rosebuds are tearing the tulle hem that they hang from. Most of the gowns are suffering from "memory"—the technical term for wrinkles left in garments by repeated wear.

Clothing is different from most other kinds of objects in museums. Garments never lose the imprint of the body that was once inside them; indeed, the chemical reactions between the materials of the garments and the wearer's body are ongoing. Perspiration, even from a long-ago dance in a Tuscan garden, may continue a hundred years later to oxidize metallic thread, to alter the molecular structure of a fabric.

As the scholar Peter Stallybrass has noted, it's not for nothing that ghosts in literature so often emerge from inside closets and wardrobes. The conservator's boxes at La Pietra may resemble coffins, but these dresses are alive. ♦



A black-and-jade silk crêpe dress with a glass-bead-embroidered neck and waist and an



overskirt that recalls the design of an ancient Chinese ship, in the Actons' ballroom. The silhouette is borrowed from the Chinese qipao.

COLM
TÓIBÍN
SLEEP

I know what you will do when morning comes. I wake before you do and I lie still. Sometimes I doze, but usually I am alert, with my eyes open. I don't move. I don't want to disturb you. I can hear your soft, calm breathing and I like that. And then at a certain point you turn toward me without opening your eyes; your hand reaches over, and you touch my shoulder or my back. And then all of you comes close to me. It is as though you were still sleeping—there is no sound from you, just a need, almost urgent but unconscious, to be close to someone. This is how the day begins when you are with me.

It is strange how much unwitting effort it has taken to bring us here. The engineers and software designers could never have guessed, as they laid out their strategies and sought investment, that the thing they were making—the Internet—would cause two strangers to meet and then, after a time, to lie in the half-light of morning, holding each other. Were it not for them, we would never have been together in this place.

One day you ask me if I hate the British, and I say that I do not. All that is over now. It is easy to be Irish these days. Easier maybe than being Jewish and knowing, as you do, that your great-aunts and uncles perished at Hitler's hands. And that your grandparents, whom you love and visit sometimes out on Long Island, lost their brothers and sisters; they live with that catastrophe day in, day out.

It is a pity that there is such great German music, you say, and I tell you that Germany comes in many guises, and you shrug and say, "Not for us."

We are in New York, on the Upper West Side, and when I open the blinds in the bedroom we can see the river and the George Washington Bridge. You don't know, because I will never tell you, how much it frightens me that the bridge is so close and in full view. You know more about music than I do, but I have read books that you have not read. I hope that you will never stumble on a copy of James Baldwin's "Another Country"; I hope that I will never come into the room and find you reading it, following Rufus through New York to his final journey up this way, on the train,

to the bridge, the jump, the water.

There is a year missing in your stories of your life, and this makes everyone who loves you watch you with care. I have asked you about it a few times and seen your hunched shoulders and your vague, empty look, the nerdy look that you have when you are low. I know your parents dislike the fact that I am older than you, but the knowledge that I don't drink alcohol or take drugs almost makes up for that, or I like to think it does. You don't drink or take drugs, either, but you do go outside to smoke, and maybe I should take up smoking, too, so that I can watch over you casually when you are out there and not have to wait and then feel relief when I hear the doors of the elevator opening and your key in the lock.

There is no year in my life that I cannot account for, but there are years that I do not think about now, years that went by slowly, in a sort of coiled pain. I have never bothered you with the details. You think I am strong because I am older, and maybe that is the way things should be.

I am old enough to remember when things were different. But no one cares now, in this apartment building or in the world outside, that we are men and we wake often in the same bed. No one cares now that when we touch each other's face we find that we both need to shave. Or that when I touch your body I find a body like mine, though in better shape and twenty and more years younger. You are circumcised and I am not. That is a difference. We are cut and uncut, as they say in this country where we both live now, where you were born.

Germany, Ireland, the Internet, gay rights, Judaism, Catholicism: they have all brought us here. To this room, to this bed in America. How easy it would have been for this never to have happened. How unlikely it would have seemed in the past.

I feel happy, rested, ready for the day as I return from the shower and find you lying on your back with your glasses on, your hands behind your head.

"You know that you were groaning in the night? Almost crying. Saying things." Your voice is accusing; there is a quaver in it.

"I don't remember anything. That's funny. Was it loud?"

"It was loud. Not all the time, but just before the end it was loud, and you were waving your hands around. I moved over to you and whispered to you, and then you fell back asleep. You were all right then."

"When you whispered to me, what did you say?"

"I said that it was all O.K., that there was nothing wrong. Something like that."

"I hope I didn't keep you awake."

"It was no problem. I went back to sleep. I don't know what you were dreaming about, but it wasn't good."

The fear comes on Saturdays, and it comes, too, if I am staying somewhere, in a hotel room, for example, and there is shouting in the street in the night. Shouting under my window. I keep it to myself, the fear, and by doing this sometimes I keep it away, at arm's length, elsewhere. But there are other times when it breaks through, something close to dread, as though what happened had not occurred yet but will occur, is about to do so, and there is nothing I can do to stop it. The fear can come from nowhere. I may be reading, as I often do on Saturdays while you practice or go to a concert with your friends. I am reading and then suddenly I look up, disturbed.

The fear enters the pit of my stomach and the base of my neck like pain, and it seems as if nothing could lift it. Eventually, as it came, it will go, though not easily. Sometimes a sigh, or a walk to the fridge, or making myself busy putting clothes or papers away, will rid me of it, but it is always hard to tell what will work. The fear could stay for a while, or come back as though it had forgotten something. It is not under my control.

I know where I was and what I was doing when my brother died. I was in Brighton, in England, and I was in bed and I could not sleep, because there were drunken crowds shouting below my hotel window. Sometime between two and three in the morning he died, in his own house in Dublin. He was alone there that night. If I had been sleeping at the moment when it happened, I might have woken, or at least stirred in the

night. But probably not. Probably I would just have gone on sleeping.

He died. That is the most important thing to say. My brother was in his own house in Dublin. He was alone. It was a Saturday night, Sunday morning. He called for an ambulance before two in the morning. When it arrived, he was dead, and the paramedics could not bring him back to life.

I have never told anyone that I was awake in that room in Brighton in those hours. It hardly matters. It matters only to me and only at times.

On one of those winter evenings when you are staying here, we go to bed early. Like a good American, you wear a T-shirt and boxers in bed. I am wearing pajamas, like a good Irishman. Chet Baker is on low. We are both reading, but I know you are restless. Because you are young, I always suspect that you are horny when I am not, and that is a joke between us. But it is probably true; it would make sense. In any case, you move toward me. I have learned always to pay attention when this happens, never to seem distracted or tired or bored. As we lie together, you whisper.

"I told my analyst about you."

"What about me?"

"About your crying in the night and my coming home on Saturday to

find you looking so frightened or sad or something that you could barely talk."

"You didn't say anything about it on Saturday. Was it this Saturday?"

"Yeah, it was Saturday. I didn't want to raise the subject."

"What did he say?"

"He says that you have to do something about it. I told him you said that Irish people don't go to analysts."

"What did he say?"

"He said that explains why there are so many bad Irish novels and plays."

"There are some good Irish plays."

"He doesn't think so."

We lie there listening to Chet Baker singing "Almost Blue," and I move to kiss you. You prop yourself up on your elbow and look at me.

"He says that you have to get help but it has to be Irish help, only an Irish analyst could make sense of you. I told him that you didn't hate the British, and maybe you could get, like, a British one, and he said it sounded like you needed help even more urgently than he'd thought."

"Do you pay him for this rubbish?"

"My dad pays him."

"He sounds like a bundle of laughs, your shrink."

"He told me not to listen to you. Just to make you do it. I said that you were O.K. most of the time. But I've told him

that before. Hey, he likes the sound of you."

"Fuck him!"

"He's good, he's nice, he's smart. And he's straight, so you don't have to worry about him."

"That's true. I don't have to worry about him."

Spring comes, and something that I had forgotten about begins. Behind this apartment building is an alley, or an opening between two buildings, and if it is warm at night some students gather there, maybe the ones who smoke. Sometimes I hear them and the sound becomes part of the night, like the noise the radiators make, until it fades. It has never bothered me in all the time I have lived here, and I have no memory of your ever remarking on it. It is quiet here, quiet compared with downtown or the apartment you share in Williamsburg on the nights when you do not stay with me.

Nonetheless, I should have known that some night that noise would find me in my sleep. Maybe if I had got an Irish shrink, as your shrink suggested, he would have warned me about this, or I would have come to warn myself after many meetings with him.

I don't remember how it begins, but you do. I am whimpering in my sleep, or so you say, and then going quiet for a while. And then when there is more shouting in the alley behind the building I start to shiver. You say that it is more like someone shuddering, recoiling in fright, but still I have no memory of this. When you try and fail to wake me, you become afraid. I know that everything you do, the way you manage your day, is driven by your need never to become afraid.

When I finally wake, you are on your cell phone and you look frightened. You tell me what happened and then you reach for your shirt.

"I'm going."

"What's wrong?"

"I'll talk to you in the morning. I'm going to get a cab."

"A cab?"

"Yeah, I have money."

I watch you dress. You are silent and deliberate. Suddenly, you seem much older. In the light from the lamp on your side of the bed I can see what you will



"Honey, I know I agreed to an open marriage, but maybe we could close it just a smidge."

look like in the future. You turn as you go out the door.

"I'll text."

Within a minute you are gone. It is three-forty-five when I look at the clock. When I text and say that I am sorry for waking you, you do not reply.

The next evening you come over. I can tell that you have something to say. You ignore me when I ask if you have eaten.

"Hey, I'm going to take my clothes and stuff."

"I'm sorry about last night."

"You scared me. There's something wrong with you. I don't know what it is, but it's too much for me."

"You don't want to stay here again?"

"Hey, I never said that. That is not what I said."

You sigh and sit down. I start to talk.

"Maybe we should—"

"No, no 'maybe,' and no 'we should.'"

You have to go and see someone. You can't do this on your own, and I can't help you, and I'm not staying here again until you've done that. It's not because I

don't want to, but it's weird. It wasn't just once, just one bad dream. It's intense. You should hear it. I thought I should record it on my phone for you, so you would know."

I imagine you holding the phone out in the dark with the RECORD button on while I am having a bad dream I can't wake from.

"Why don't we talk during the week?"

"Sure."

You go to the bedroom and after some minutes reappear with a bag.

"Are you certain you want to take your stuff?"

"Yeah."

You have already taken the keys to this apartment off your key ring and you put them on the hall table. We hug and you leave with your head down. I stand with my back to the door and my eyes closed as I hear the elevator arrive and open its doors for you. And all I can think is that I would never have done this to you, walked out like that. And all I can think then is that

maybe that's what's wrong with me. You have learned something that I don't want to know.

There is always that sense of being released when the plane takes off from J.F.K. to Dublin. Every Irish person who gets on that plane knows the feeling; some, like me, also know that it does not last for long. I read a bit and then sleep and then wake up and look around and go to the bathroom and notice that most of the other passengers are sleeping. But I don't think I will sleep again. I don't want to read. There are almost four hours still to go.

I doze and wake and then fall into the deepest sleep in the hour before we land, so that I have to be woken and told to put my seat in the upright position.

There is a hotel on St. Stephen's Green, on the opposite side from the Shelbourne, and I have booked a room there for four nights. I have told no



The Average American
Speaks One Language.

BE MORE THAN AVERAGE

When you learn a language the Rosetta Stone way, you don't just learn something new. You become someone new—someone with more skills, more confidence, more opportunities. Start learning a language today and find a new you in a world of possibility.



SCAN FOR
FREE
DEMO



MSRP \$ ~~499~~ SALE \$249
LEVELS 1-5 SET
(877) 202-1664 RosettaStone.com/print



©2015 Rosetta Stone Ltd. All rights reserved. Free shipping for products shipped within the contiguous United States only. Offer limited to TOTALe CD-ROM set purchases made directly from Rosetta Stone and cannot be combined with any other offer. Offer valid through March 31, 2015. Rosetta Stone TOTALe includes interactive online services that require online access and are offered on a subscription basis for a specified term. Online services must be begun within 6 months of purchase or are subject to forfeiture.

one that I am coming here, except the doctor, a psychiatrist, whom I met years ago, when he helped a friend of mine who was suffering from depression and could not sleep and could not handle anything. The doctor knew my friend's family. I remember the time he spent with my friend and how he came back again and again. His kindness, his patience, his watchfulness. I remember that I made him tea on a few of those nights, and we spoke about the late Beethoven quartets and he told me which recordings he favored, as my friend lay next door in a darkened room. I remember that he liked jazz and that he found it strange that I did not.

Until I met you, that is. I liked listening to jazz with you.

When I called him from New York, he remembered that time and mentioned also that he had read a few of my books. He said that he would see me, but it would be best not to do it when I was jet-lagged. He told me to take a few days between landing in Dublin and the appointment. He was living alone now, he said, so he could see me at his house. He gave me the address, and we agreed on the time. When I asked about payment, he told me I could send him some jazz CDs from New York or my next book.

In Dublin, I keep to the side streets on the first day. I go to the cinema in the afternoon and then up into Rathmines and find a few places to linger, where I think I will meet no one I know. The city seems low-key, almost calm.

There is a new cinema in Smithfield and I go there on the second day and see two films in a row. I find a place to eat nearby. I notice how crowded it becomes, and how loud the voices are, how much laughing and shouting there is. I think about the city I used to know, which was a place that specialized in the half-said thing, the shrug, a place where people looked at one another out of the corner of their eye. All that is over now, or at least in Smithfield it is.

I try not to sleep during the daytime on either of those days, although I want

to. I go to Hodges Figgis and Books Upstairs and buy some books. In the evening, I watch the Irish news and some current-affairs programs on the television in my hotel room.

And then on the third day, in the late afternoon, I go to Ranelagh to see the psychiatrist. I am unsure what we will say or do. I am scheduled to go back to New York the following day. Maybe there is a drug for what is wrong with me, but I doubt it. I need him to listen to me, or maybe I just need to be able to tell you when I come back that I have done this. Maybe, I think, he will refer me to someone in New York whom I can see in the same regular way that you see your analyst, as you call him.

There is a long room that was once two rooms, and it is beautifully furnished. We take our shoes off and sit opposite each other on armchairs toward the back of that room. I realize that he does not need me to talk; he listened carefully to what I said on the phone. He asks me if I have ever been hypnotized, and I say no. There was a guy, I remember, who used to do it on television or in the theatre. I can't recall his name—Paul something—but I have seen him on television once or twice. I think of hypnosis as a party game, or something that happens in black-and-white films. I did not expect the psychiatrist to suggest it as something he might do with me.

He is, he says, going to use hypnosis. We will both need to be quiet. It would

be best if I closed my eyes, he says. I think for a second that I should ask him why he is doing this, or whether he does it all the time, or what it could achieve, but there is something about the calm way that he approaches the task, something deliberate, that

makes me feel that it is better not to ask anything. I am still wary and I am sure he notices this, but it does not deter him. I close my eyes.

He leaves silence. I don't know for how long he leaves silence. And then in a new voice, a voice that is more than a whisper but still has an undertow of whispering, he tells me that he is going to count to ten, and at the

word "ten" I will be asleep. I nod and he begins.

His voice has a softness but also an authority. I wonder if he has trained in hypnosis or if he developed his method on his own with other patients. When he gets to "ten," there is no great change. But I do not move or tell him that I am still awake. I keep my eyes closed, trying to guess how long it will be before he realizes that the spell has not worked, that I am not asleep, that I still know where I am.

"I want you to think about your brother."

"I'm getting nothing."

"I want you to take your time."

I leave my mind empty and my eyes closed. Nothing is happening, but there is a density to the feelings I am having, although the feelings themselves are ordinary ones. I am oddly relaxed and also uneasy. It is like a moment from childhood, or even adulthood, in which I am able to stop worrying about a pressing matter for a moment in the full knowledge that the worry will come back. During this interlude I do not move or speak.

"I want you to think about your brother," he says again.

I let out a small moan, a sort of cry, but there is no emotion behind it. It is as if I were just doing what he expects me to do.

"Nothing, nothing," I whisper.

"Follow it now."

"There's nothing."

He leaves silence, leaves space for me to moan and tell him where I am going, but I am not sure where that is. It seems like nowhere in particular. I am moving. I am also awake. He speaks several times more, his voice softer and more insistent. And then I stop him. I need silence now and he leaves silence again. I sigh. I am puzzled. I cannot tell where I am going. I know that I am sitting in an armchair in a house in Ranelagh and that I can open my eyes at any moment. I know that I am going back to New York tomorrow.

And then it comes, the hallway, and it is a precise hallway in a house I have known but never lived in. There is lino on the floor and a hall table and a door to a living room, the door slightly ajar. There are stairs at the end of the hallway.

And then there is no "I." I am a "he." I am not myself.



"Do you feel sad about your brother?"
the psychiatrist asks.

"No. No."

I am lying on the floor of that hallway. I am dying. I have called an ambulance and left the front door on the latch.

The dying comes as lightness, a growing lightness, as though something were leaving me, and I am letting it leave, and then I am panicking, or almost panicking, and then feeling tired.

"Follow how you feel."

I signal for him not to speak again. The idea that there is less of me now, and that this lessness will go on and there will be even less of me soon, that this diminishment will continue, is centered in my chest. Something is going down, going out, with a strange and persistent ease. There is no pain, more a mild pressure within the self, or the self that I am now, in this hallway, this room. It is happening within the body as much as within the self that can think or remember. Something is reaching out to death, but it is not death; "death" is too simple a word. It is closer to an emptying out of strain, until all that is left is nothing—not peace or anything like that, just nothing. This is coming gradually and inevitably. I, we, are smiling, or seem to be content and have no concerns. It is almost pleasure, but not exactly pleasure, and not exactly the absence of pain, either. It is nothing, and the nothing comes with no force, just a desire or a need, which seems natural, to allow things to proceed, not to get in their way.

I think then that the experience is ending, and before it does I want to know if our mother is close now, but that comes as a question only. I see her face, but I do not feel her presence. I hold the thought and find myself longing for some completion of it, some further satisfying image, but nothing comes. Instead, there is stillness, and then the sound of the door being pushed open and voices. I can hear their urgency, but it is like urgency in a film that I cannot fully see; it is not real. It is in the background as I am lifted, as my chest is pushed and pummelled, as more voices are raised, as I am moved.

Then there is nothing, really nothing—the nothing that I am and the nothing that is in this room now. Whatever



"These are magic beans, my boy. Their value comes from growth and scale, not revenue."

• •

has happened, it has ended. There is nowhere else to go.

I begin to moan again, and then I am quiet and stay quiet until the psychiatrist says softly that he will count to ten again, and when he says the word "ten" I will come back from where I have been and I will be in the room with him.

"I don't know where you were, but I left you there."

I do not reply.

"Maybe you got something you can work on."

"I became him."

"Did you feel sad?"

"I was him. I wasn't me."

He looks at me calmly.

"Maybe the feelings will come now."

"I became him."

We do not speak for a while. When I look at my watch I think that I am misreading it. The watch says that two hours have passed. It is almost dark outside. He makes tea and puts on some music. When I find my shoes, I discover that I have trouble putting them on, as if my feet had swelled during the time that I was elsewhere. Eventually, I stand up and prepare to leave. He gives me a number I can call in a few weeks when I have absorbed what happened.

"What *did* happen?" I ask.

"I don't know. You are the one who has to do the work."

He follows me in his stocking feet to the front door. We shake hands, and I leave. I walk through Dublin, from Ranelagh to St. Stephen's Green, passing people on their way home from work.

It is winter in New York and I have not replied to your texts. They come more sporadically and say less and less. It is down to "Hey!" or "Hi" and soon, I think, they will stop. When I go to Lincoln Center to see a film or hear music, I look at the list of upcoming concerts and check to see if your name is there. It would not surprise me on one of those nights if I found you standing close by, looking at me.

I wake alone now. I wake early and lie thinking or dozing. In the morning, I carry the full burden of the night's sleep. It is as if I had been tiring myself out in the darkness, rather than resting. There is no one to tell me if I make a sound as I sleep. I don't know if I snore, or whimper, or cry out. I like to think that I am silent, but how can I tell? ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

Colm Tóibín on "Sleep."



Participants in the 1957 World Youth Festival, in Moscow, which was sponsored by left-wing student organizations. The C.I.A.

THE CRITICS



A CRITIC AT LARGE

A FRIEND OF THE DEVIL

Inside a famous Cold War deception.

BY LOUIS MENAND

Consider the following strategic dilemma. You are a superpower that hopes to convert other nations to principles you hold vital—these might be individual liberty, private property, and free markets. There is another superpower out there that is hoping to do the same thing, to persuade other nations to embrace *its* principles—for example, social equality, state ownership, and centralized planning.

One day, you realize that this rival superpower has been busy creating international organizations and staging world congresses and festivals in the name of peace and democracy, and inviting people from other nations to participate.

These organizations and festivals are fronts. Their membership, their programs, and the political positions they enthusiastically adopt are all clandestinely orchestrated by the rival superpower, which is pumping large amounts of money into them. What's more, in your view that rival superpower is not a peace-loving democracy at all. It's a totalitarian regime. Yet its slogans attract unwary writers and artists, intellectuals, students, organized labor—people who believe in world peace and international coöperation.

You believe in those things, too. But you think that the slogans are being used to advance your rival's interests, one of which is to rob you of your superpowers. What do you do? Doing nothing is not an option. Remember, you are a superpower.

The obvious response is to create your own international organizations

and sponsor your own world congresses and festivals, and use them to promote your interests. Sadly, however, you cannot do this in a public and transparent way. For it happens that your citizens are not all that taken with the ideals of world peace and international coöperation, and they would not be pleased to see you spend their tax dollars to support the kind of people who advance that agenda. They would prefer to see their tax dollars spent on defense. In fact, they would prefer for there to be no tax dollars at all.

There is also the problem that one of your principles as a superpower is the belief that governments should not interfere with the activities of voluntary associations, such as writers' congresses and student groups. You don't believe in fronts. This is a key point of difference between you and your rival superpower. So your hands appear to be tied.

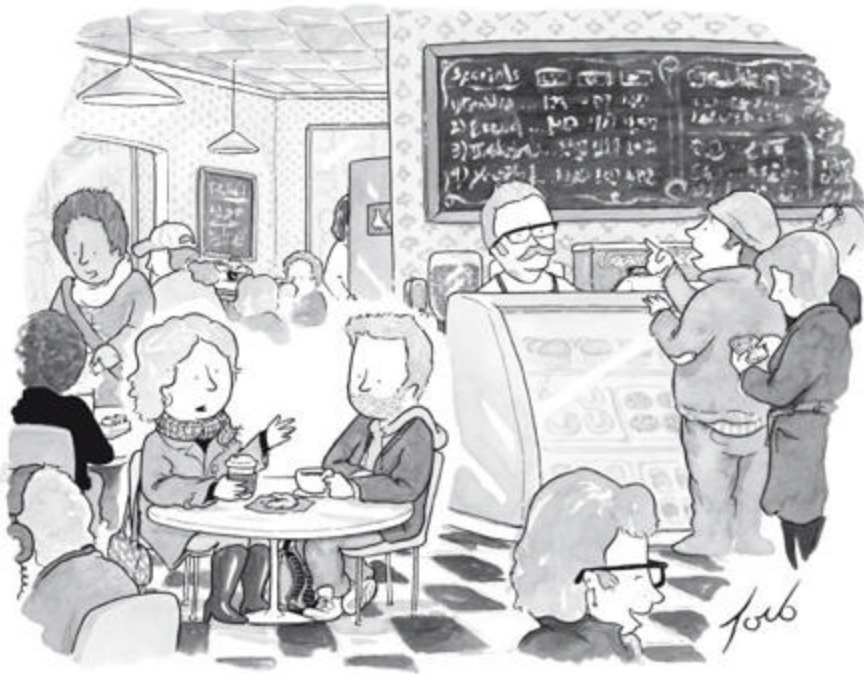
Unless you could do it all in secret. Suppose you directed taxpayer dollars through back channels, disguised as gifts from private benefactors and foundations, to organizations that operated internationally, and that reached out to groups in other countries in the name of the principles you believe in. You would want to be sure that the people running those organizations either didn't know where the money was coming from or could be trusted to keep it a secret. You might need to pull strings occasionally to get the right people in charge and the right positions enthusiastically adopted.

Wouldn't that be like creating fronts?



ABOVE: FRANÇOIS AVRIL; OPPOSITE: ROBERT CARL COHEN

infiltrated the festival.



"What is friendship if not constant amateurish psychoanalysis?"

Sort of. But here's the thing: fundamentally, everyone would be on the same page. They just might not be knowingly on the same page. No one would be forced to do or say anything. After you succeeded in stripping your rival of its superpowers, there would no longer be a need for secrecy. Until that day arrived, however, national security might demand this tiny bite out of the principle of transparency. The only people who could object would be people who were already on the wrong side.

After the Second World War, our superpower solved this dilemma in exactly this way and on exactly this line of reasoning. From the more or less official start of the Cold War, Harry Truman's speech to Congress in March, 1947, announcing his policy "to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures"—that is, Communist aggression—the United States created fronts and secretly infiltrated existing nongovernmental organizations in order to advance American interests abroad.

Almost exactly twenty years after Truman's speech, in February, 1967, the government's cover was spectacularly blown by a college dropout. The drop-

out's name was Michael Wood, and the operation he exposed was the C.I.A.'s covert use of an organization called the National Student Association. The revelation had a cascading effect, and helped to mark the end of the first phase of the Cold War.

The C.I.A. had its eye on the N.S.A. from the start—both were born in 1947, a few months after Truman's speech—and the relationship gained steadily in strength and intimacy until the day the secret became public. Its story is now told in detail for the first time, in Karen M. Paget's *"Patriotic Betrayal"* (Yale).

Patriotic Betrayal" is an amazing piece of research. Paget has industriously combed the archives and interviewed many of the surviving players, including former C.I.A. officials. And Paget herself is part of the story she tells. In 1965, her husband, a student-body president at the University of Colorado, became an officer in the N.S.A., and, as a spouse, she was informed of the covert relationship by two former N.S.A. officials who had become C.I.A. agents.

She was sworn to secrecy. The penalty for violating the agreement was twenty years. Paget describes herself

back then as "an apolitical twenty-year-old from a small town in Iowa," and she says that she was terrified. Fifty years later, she is still angry. She has channelled her outrage into as scrupulous an investigation of the covert relationship as the circumstances allow.

One circumstance is the fact that a good deal of material is classified. Paget was able to fish up bits and pieces using the Freedom of Information Act. But most of the iceberg is still underwater, and will probably remain there. So there is sometimes an aura of vagueness around who was calling the tune and why.

The vagueness was also there by design. It was baked into the covert relationship. There was a lot of winking and nodding; that's what helped people believe they were on the same page. But it means that much of the history of what passed between the C.I.A. and the N.S.A. is irrecoverable. Still, *"Patriotic Betrayal"* is a conscientious attempt to take the full measure of an iconic piece of Cold War subterfuge.

It's a dense book. Readers will be glad for the three-page guide in the back to abbreviations and acronyms. (There are also nearly ninety pages of endnotes, with more references accessible online.) Organizationally, the N.S.A.-C.I.A. affair was quite complex. There were a number of quasi-independent parts—another reason, besides the secrecy, that it was hard to see what was really going on.

The parts included the World Federation of Democratic Youth, or W.F.D.Y., a Soviet front organization created right after the war; the International Union of Students, or I.U.S., formed at a world congress of students in Prague in 1946, with a Czech Communist elected president; and the N.S.A. itself, which was founded at a student convention in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1947, in order to represent the United States in the I.U.S.

The Madison convention also created an N.S.A. subcommittee on international affairs and gave it authority to deal with international issues. The key move was the separation of the main N.S.A. office, which was in Madison, from the international division, which was housed in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It was the Cambridge branch of the N.S.A. that received most

of the C.I.A.'s funding and did most of the C.I.A.'s bidding. Madison was kept out of the loop.

In 1948, there was a Communist coup in Czechoslovakia, a crucial event in the hardening of postwar relations. When the I.U.S. refused to condemn the coup, the N.S.A. withdrew and set about forming a rival group, the International Student Conference, or I.S.C. These two organizations, the I.U.S. and the I.S.C., became superpower proxies in the looking-glass war that was the Cold War. Through the N.S.A., the C.I.A. tried to orchestrate what happened in the I.S.C., just as the I.U.S. was responsive to the demands of the Kremlin.

The N.S.A. was never a virgin. Paget reveals that, even before Prague, American students were subject to surveillance and scheming by three groups of grownups: the State Department, the F.B.I., and the Catholic Church. It can be forgotten how influential a role the Church's highly disciplined anti-Communism played in Cold War affairs. The Holy Father took a personal interest in the danger of Communist infiltration of youth organizations, including the N.S.A.; the bishops kept a close eye on Catholic student leaders; and Catholics usually voted as a bloc in N.S.A. and I.S.C. meetings.

The Pope's anti-Communism was too rigid for the C.I.A. The agency also had little use for J. Edgar Hoover, with whom the Church collaborated in investigating students' backgrounds, or for Senator Joseph McCarthy and his hunt for Communists in the government. Agency politics—or, rather, the politics of agency policies—were farther to the left.

The N.S.A., for example, was a forthrightly liberal organization. Civil rights was part of the agenda early on. The N.S.A.'s second president (1948-49), James (Ted) Harris, was an African-American (and a Catholic). Its fourth president (1950-51) was the future civil-rights and antiwar activist Allard Lowenstein (not a Catholic). The N.S.A. helped found the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, a principal organizer of the march from Selma that led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act, in 1965. And the N.S.A.'s politics were typical of most of the organi-

zations in the C.I.A.'s covert network: they were socially progressive, anti-colonialist, and sometimes even socialist.

One customary explanation is that the people who ran covert operations at the C.I.A. from 1947 to 1967 were not right-wing jingoists. They were liberal anti-Communists, veterans of Roosevelt's Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the C.I.A. They were good guys who despised the Soviet Union as a traitor to progressive principles.

If people held this belief about the C.I.A., the agency exploited it. C.I.A. officials used to tell N.S.A. students who were in the know—the agency's term for them was "witting" (or "witty")—that, while the State Department supported authoritarian dictatorships, the C.I.A. supported foreign students who were involved in democratic resistance and national liberation movements. This was supposed to make the N.S.A. students feel that they had bargained with the right devil.

The students were being misled. The C.I.A. is part of the executive branch. Its director reports to the President; its operations and expenditures are subject to congressional oversight. The director of the C.I.A. during the nineteen-fifties, Allen Dulles, was the Secretary of State's brother. The notion that the C.I.A. was running its own foreign policy, or that it was a "rogue elephant," as one senator later called it, is absurd.

After the revelations of the nineteen-sixties and seventies, when many of the C.I.A.'s undercover operations were exposed, people began talking about the agency as though it were some kind of underground cell, an organization with no accountability, up to its own dirty tricks. But a report on the C.I.A.'s covert operations made immediately after the 1967 revelations concluded that the agency "did not act on its own initiative." In 1976, a more critical congressional report, which was never officially released, stated, "All evidence in hand suggests that the CIA, far from being out of control, has been utterly responsive to the instructions of the President and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs."

It's true that the C.I.A. did not

Live simply.
Live freely.
Live fully.



Inclusivity, collaboration, compassion, respect—these are the principles upon which Kendal was founded. Guided by these principles, Kendal is transforming cultural ideas about what retirement can be. With boundless opportunities for lifelong learning, arts and entertainment, wellness programs and more, life in a Kendal community is **full of possibility.**

To learn more visit **DiscoverKendal.org** or call **1.877.525.5013.**

Live... KENDAL®

Together, transforming the experience of aging.™

CHICAGO • DC METRO • NEW YORK
PENNSYLVANIA • MASSACHUSETTS
NEW HAMPSHIRE • OHIO • VIRGINIA



Not-for-Profit Communities and Services for Older Adults in the Quaker tradition.

©2015 KENDAL

Music to Your Ears

Retirement life in harmony with a love of music. The Oberlin Conservatory of Music presents more than 500 performances each year.

KENDAL[®]
at Oberlin
Together, transforming the experience of aging[™]

1-800-548-9469
kao.kendal.org/Oberlin-connection

SILVER HILL HOSPITAL
RESTORING MENTAL HEALTH SINCE 1931

Renowned Psychiatric Care in an Exceptional Setting
Psychiatric and Addiction Treatment for Adolescents and Adults

www.silverhillhospital.org
New Canaan, CT • (866) 548-4455

WIDESHoes.COM

Men's Sizes 5-20 in 3E-6E wide
Women's Sizes 5-13 in 2E-6E wide

Hitchcock

800-992-WIDE
Hitchcock Shoes • Hingham, MA 02043 • dept. 6905

Ohana Family Camp in Vermont

Swim
Sail
Kayak
Canoe

Archery
Tennis
Hiking
Biking

Ohanacamp.org • (802) 333-3460

GARY WEEKS & COMPANY
FURNITUREMAKERS

Rockers, Dining Furniture, Barstools, Desks

800-986-3187 www.garyweeks.com

Dallas Pridgen Jewelry
-one at a time by hand-

Rabbit Bracelet Sterling Silver \$165 14kgold \$980

800-477-1856

French & Italian Holiday Rentals

Live like a European in your own chateau, villa or farmhouse. Weekly rentals. Most regions.

www.villeetvillage.com
(510) 559-8080

VILLE ET VILLAGE[®]

always fully inform Administrations about what it was up to, but the agency had reason to believe that there were some things Administrations preferred not to know. Deniability is a crucial ingredient of covert operations. The C.I.A. used the N.S.A. to further the policies of the American government. If it had been found doing anything contrary to the wishes of the President, its plug would have been pulled very fast.

So what, exactly, was the N.S.A. useful for? This is where things get murky. According to Paget's account, the N.S.A. was apparently not used for what the C.I.A. called "political warfare." The agency did create a front organization called the Independent Research Service (inventing titles that are as meaningless as possible is part of the spy game) for the purpose of recruiting American students to disrupt Soviet-controlled World Youth Festivals in Vienna, in 1959, and Helsinki, in 1962. The person in charge was the future feminist Gloria Steinem, who knew perfectly well where the money was coming from and never regretted taking it. "If I had a choice I would do it again," she later said.

But that operation did not involve the N.S.A. Nor was the N.S.A. used only to promote American principles abroad, although that was part of the reason for funding it. The C.I.A. embedded agents in the N.S.A., and it worked behind the scenes to insure that pliable students got elected to run the association and that the desired policy positions got adopted. It took the extra precaution of starting up a covertly funded summer program, called the International Student Relations Seminar, and using it to groom future N.S.A. leaders. A number of N.S.A. members who went through the seminar went on to have careers at the agency.

Essentially, the N.S.A. functioned as a glove that concealed the American government's hand and allowed it to do business with people who would never knowingly have done business with the American government. These people thought that they were dealing with a

student group that was independent of the government. They had no idea that the N.S.A. was a front.

And what did this permit the C.I.A. to do? First, the N.S.A. was used as a cutout. The C.I.A. funnelled financial support to favored foreign-student groups by means of grants ostensibly coming from the N.S.A. Second, the N.S.A. was a recruitment device. It enabled the agency to identify potential intelligence sources among student leaders in other countries. And, third, N.S.A. members who attended international conferences filed written reports or were debriefed afterward, giving the C.I.A. a huge database of information.

The C.I.A. did not buy into the adage that the student leader of today is the student leader of tomorrow. It calculated that the heads of national student organizations were likely some day to become important figures in their countries' governments. When that happened (and it often did), the American government had a file on them. "Over time, witting staff reported on thousands of foreign students' political tendencies, personality traits, and future aspirations," Paget writes. "They submitted detailed analyses of political dynamics within foreign student unions and countries."

This may seem benign enough, but there was a problem. It had to do with the "State Department bad guys, C.I.A. good guys" routine. The State Department deals with nations with which

the United States has diplomatic relations. Having diplomatic relations with a foreign government prohibits you from negotiating with, or acknowledging the legitimacy of, groups committed to that government's overthrow.

This is why it's convenient to have an agency that operates clandestinely. The C.I.A. could cultivate relations with opposition groups secretly, and this permitted the American government to work both sides of the street.

Paget thinks that, in some cases, the information the C.I.A. gathered about students who were political opponents of a regime may have ended up in the hands of that regime, which could then



have used the information to arrest and execute its enemies. She suspects that this may have happened in several countries where the American government was involved in regime change, including Iraq, Iran, and South Africa.

But it's all speculation. There are no smoking guns in Paget's book—no specific cases in which the C.I.A. made students' names available to a foreign government. And the reason, of course, has to do with the classified material. No intelligence agency will ever release documents that reveal the identities of people with whom it had contacts. That information is at the very bottom of the iceberg.

It's odd that the relationship remained secret as long as it did. The N.S.A. was one of many organizations covertly funded by the C.I.A. Over the life of those relationships, hundreds of people must have been in the know. But until Michael Wood spilled the beans no one ever spoke up publicly. This is a testament to something: in the case of the N.S.A., the naïveté of the students; the arrogance of the grownups (at the C.I.A., N.S.A. students were referred to as “the kiddies”); the power of anti-Communism to trump every scruple.

One thing it is not a testament to is the C.I.A.'s tradecraft. The evidence of the agency's covert funding system was hidden in plain sight. The world got a peek in 1964, when a House of Representatives subcommittee ran an investigation into the tax-exempt status of philanthropic foundations. The committee had trouble getting information from the I.R.S. about a certain New York-based charitable foundation, the J. M. Kaplan Fund.

The chair of the committee, a Texas congressman named Wright Patman, surmised that the reason the I.R.S. was not cooperating was that the C.I.A. was preventing it. Patman didn't appreciate the disrespect; in retaliation, he made public a list of eight foundations that, between 1961 and 1963, had given almost a million dollars to the J. M. Kaplan Fund.

“PATMAN ATTACKS ‘SECRET’ C.I.A. LINK: Says Agency Gave Money to Private Group Acting as Its Sub-Rosa ‘Conduit’” was the headline in the *Times*, which published the names of the eight

“conduit” foundations. After a closed-door meeting with representatives from the C.I.A. and the I.R.S., Patman emerged to announce that if there was a C.I.A. connection it was no longer of interest to his subcommittee, and that he was dropping the matter.

But the cat was partway out of the bag. As their transparently invented names suggest—the Gotham Foundation, the Borden Trust, the Andrew Hamilton Fund, and so on—these eight foundations were C.I.A. cutouts. The agency had approached wealthy people it knew to be sympathetic and asked them to head dummy foundations. Those people were then put on a masthead, a name for the foundation was invented, sometimes an office was rented to provide an address, and a conduit came into being. The members of the phony boards even held annual meetings, at which “business” was discussed, expenses paid by the agency.

The dummy foundations were used to channel money to groups the agency wanted to support. Sometimes the C.I.A. passed funds through the dummies to legitimate charitable foundations, like the Kaplan Fund, which in turn passed it along to groups like the National Student Association. Sometimes the cutouts existed solely to write checks to the C.I.A.'s beneficiaries.

The C.I.A.'s name did not appear anywhere. The giveaway was the dollar-for-dollar equivalence of the amount received from the dummy and the amount granted to the target group. If the expenses side of Kaplan's books showed a two-hundred-thousand-dollar grant to the N.S.A., the income side would show a two-hundred-thousand-dollar donation from one of the agency's dummy foundations.

The *Times* published an editorial saying that “the practice ought to stop. . . . The use of Government intelligence funds to get foundations to underwrite institutions, organizations, magazines and newspapers abroad is a distortion of C.I.A.'s mission on gathering and evaluating information.” In 1966, the paper ran a series of articles on the C.I.A.'s spying operations, in which it revealed that the C.I.A. was funding the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its many European-based magazines. The paper also reported that the

DESIGN@HARVARD

“An unparalleled opportunity
to explore the world of design.”

Architecture | THE
Landscape Architecture CAREER
Urban Planning DISCOVERY
Urban Design PROGRAM

JUNE 15 - JULY 24, 2015

Harvard University Graduate School of Design
gsd.harvard.edu/careerdiscovery
617-495-5453



McLean 3East

HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL AFFILIATE

**She's hurting on the inside.
She's harming on the outside.**

Unparalleled DBT treatment from U.S.
News' Top Ranked Psychiatric Hospital
877.967.7233 mclean3east.org

Extraordinary
summers for
high school
students

Summerfuel

SUMMERFUEL.COM
US / UK / SPAIN / FRANCE / ITALY



Blazer Sale

Blazers for ladies and gentlemen
15 colors. All sizes.
Were \$195, Now \$165

Hunter and Coggins

Asheville, NC 1-800-343-9396
hunterandcoggins.com

one-bag travel

TOM BIHN
WWW.TOMBIHN.COM



Set a beautiful table with us.

REPLACEMENTS, LTD.

China, Crystal & Silver
400,000 Patterns • Old & New

800-REPLACE replacements.com



MANTRA

Patinated Bronze
10.5" H
SolidMetalSculptures.com
1-800-337-8907

agency had funded some American academics when they travelled abroad. The C.I.A. seems to have done nothing in response to these stories, and nothing came of them.

Then Michael Wood made his appearance. Wood was from Glendale, California. In 1964, he had dropped out of Pomona College to become a civil-rights organizer in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles. His work there attracted the attention of the National Student Association, and it offered him a job.

By then, the N.S.A. represented about a million students from more than four hundred American colleges. It had just moved its offices (with help from the C.I.A.) to Washington, D.C., to adjoining four-story town houses near Dupont Circle. Wood was soon promoted to the position of director of development—fund-raising.

He discovered something strange. No one at the N.S.A. seemed terribly interested in raising money. Grant proposals were perfunctory, and Wood learned that the president of the N.S.A., Philip Sherburne, the man who had hired him, was negotiating for donations on his own. Wood confronted Sherburne and told him that unless he was given control of all fund-raising activities he would have to resign. Sherburne invited him to lunch. This was in March, 1966.

Sherburne had grown up on a dairy farm in Oregon. Wood liked him. They met in a restaurant on Connecticut Avenue called the Sirloin and Saddle, where Sherburne violated his secrecy agreement and told Wood about the C.I.A. He told Wood that he was desperately trying to terminate the relationship (which was true), and asked him to keep their conversation secret.

Wood knew that if he revealed the contents of the conversation Sherburne could go to jail. But he hated the thought that the C.I.A. had financial leverage over the N.S.A. That fall, Wood was fired from the N.S.A. Paget reports that he was not getting along with people at the office. But he had already decided to go public, and had begun surreptitiously making copies of N.S.A. financial records.

Paget doesn't explain how Wood contacted the press. The story is that

he met Marc Stone, a public-relations man who happened to be the brother of the investigative journalist I. F. Stone, and who represented a West Coast magazine called *Ramparts*. Though only four years old, *Ramparts* had become a slick muckraker with a New Left slant and a rapidly growing circulation under its young editor, Warren Hinckle.

The magazine began looking into Wood's story, which seemed hard to believe and impossible to confirm. But its researchers discovered records showing that some of the eight dummy foundations named by Patman two years before were donors to the N.S.A. The C.I.A. had not even bothered to change their names. By February, 1967, the magazine had a story ready to go.

The C.I.A. got wind of the magazine's investigation. It gathered past presidents of the N.S.A. and scheduled a news conference at which the presidents were to admit receiving C.I.A. money but swear that the C.I.A. had never influenced N.S.A. policy. They thought this would defuse any story that the magazine eventually published.

Ramparts, in turn, got wind of the C.I.A.'s plan to scoop its scoop. Hinckle bought ads in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. These ran on February 14th, Valentine's Day; they announced, "In its March issue, *Ramparts* magazine will document how the CIA has infiltrated and subverted the world of American student leaders." Placing the ad tipped off the *Times* and the *Post*, and their reporters called the C.I.A. for comment. And so, on the same day the *Ramparts* ads appeared, both newspapers ran articles on the C.I.A.'s covert funding of the N.S.A.

This time, the story caught fire. Wood went on ABC's "Issues and Answers," where he was asked whether he thought that he had destroyed the C.I.A. as an effective instrument in the Cold War. CBS News broadcast an hour-long program, hosted by Mike Wallace, called "In the Pay of the CIA." The major news magazines ran cover stories.

Once the N.S.A. thread had been pulled, the whole tapestry of C.I.A. covert operations started to unravel. Reporters discovered that the money trail wound through some eigh-

teen dummy foundations and twenty-one legitimate foundations. The *Los Angeles Times* found more than fifty grantees. The agency gave money to the National Council of Churches, the United Auto Workers, the International Commission of Jurists, the International Marketing Institute, the American Friends of the Middle East, the Pan American Foundation, the American Newspaper Guild, the National Education Association, the Communications Workers of America, and the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Outside Russia.

Some of the funded groups were creatures of the C.I.A. Radio Free Europe and the Free Russia Fund, which regularly appealed to the public for contributions, had actually been created by the government and were funded by the C.I.A. Other organizations had C.I.A. agents planted in them. A few groups had no idea about the real source of the funds they lived on. An organization headed by the socialist Norman Thomas got money from the C.I.A.

The *Ramparts* story effectively killed the covert-funding system. As Hinckle put it in his delightful memoir, "If You Have a Lemon, Make Lemonade," "It is a rare thing in this business when you say bang and somebody says I'm dead." More than that, the revelations meant that the whole covert-funding operation had backfired. An effort to curry the allegiance of foreign élites ended up alienating them almost completely. After 1967, every American venture in international cultural relations, official or unofficial, became suspect. The cultural Cold War came apart.

Paget struggles at the end of her book to find an upside to the story she tells, some case in which C.I.A. involvement in the N.S.A. helped the United States win the Cold War. The record, she concludes, "is mixed at best and frequently dismal." There is no evidence, for example, that the N.S.A. ever persuaded anyone to renounce Communism. The most that can be said, she thinks, is that the Soviet Union did not get to have the field of international student affairs all to itself. There was another front in the game. ♦

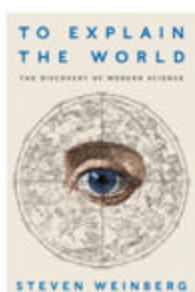
BRIEFLY NOTED



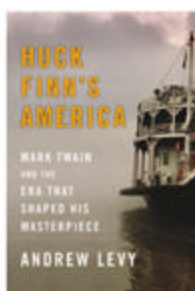
A SPOOL OF BLUE THREAD, by Anne Tyler (Knopf). This airy saga examines three generations of a Baltimore family. In warm, lucid prose, Tyler skips back and forth through the twentieth century to depict the Whitshanks, “one of those enviable families that radiate clannishness and togetherness.” The narrative is as nebulous and interconnected as a long conversation with a relative, peppered with family secrets, well-worn anecdotes, and accounts of domestic squabbles long ago resolved: a fistfight at the beach, a clandestine love affair, the return of a prodigal son. By the end, it’s clear that the story Tyler is telling is about the way that an ordinary family spins a mythology about itself: “Like most families, they imagined they were special.”



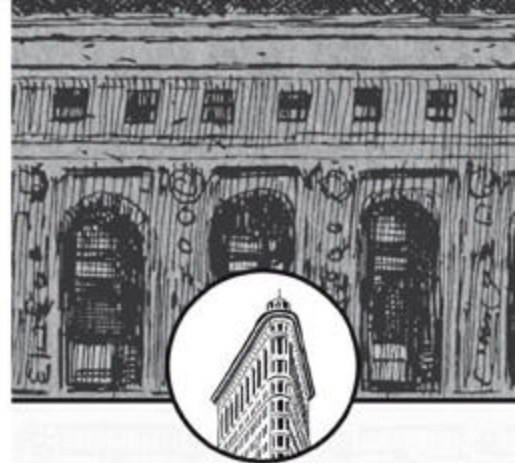
BUTTERFLIES IN NOVEMBER, by Audur Ava Ólafsdóttir, translated from the Icelandic by Brian FitzGibbon (Black Cat). This picaresque novel follows a young Icelandic woman, newly separated from her husband and saddled with the care of a friend’s small son, who sets out on an impulsive trip around the island’s Ring Road. The circular road literally and metaphorically sends the narrator back to her roots. A translator by trade, she constantly ponders words and meanings, yet seems to be searching for “a world beyond words.” Her quiriness is perhaps too self-consciously achieved—we get a collection of whimsical recipes, including one for knitting baby socks—but the book is carried by the evocation of the country’s bleak, moody beauty.



TO EXPLAIN THE WORLD, by Steven Weinberg (Harper). In this thoughtful history, a Nobel Prize-winning theoretical physicist traces the emergence of modern science from ancient Greece through Newton. The book’s defining preoccupation is with error: the story of science becomes the story of humans struggling to overcome their own ideas. This process is halting but, in Weinberg’s telling, glorious and unlikely (as when Newton divines the color spectrum in a beam of white light). It is also ongoing: contemporary science, he writes, faces limitations in, for example, its efforts to unify its various branches. But for scientists the fear of error is not nearly as great as “the pleasure we get when our methods succeed in explaining something.”



HUCK FINN'S AMERICA, by Andrew Levy (Simon & Schuster). Arguing that Twain’s iconic work has been misunderstood by modern readers as a story principally about race, this book characterizes it as a satirical comment on the debates that raged at the time regarding “compulsory education, juvenile delinquency, at-risk children, and the different ways we raise boys from girls, and rich from poor.” Levy nonetheless does examine issues of race, showing that Twain’s lifelong fascination with minstrel shows influenced both the novel’s composition and a promotional campaign that took the form of a travelling revue. Both themes are assured, if not entirely unified; where they align, they remind us that Huck resists attempts at reduction—the urge, as Levy puts it, to “stick him in school and uncomplicate him.”

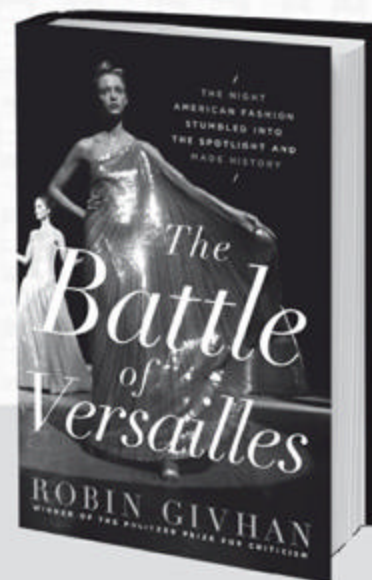


FLATIRON
BOOKS
NEW YORK

Landmark Reading.

“Givhan proves that a fashion show is about far more than clothes. As this fascinating book shows, it can spark a social revolution.”

—Dana Thomas,
author of *Deluxe*



NOVEMBER 28, 1973.

THE WORLD'S SOCIAL
ELITE GATHERED FOR
AN INTERNATIONAL
FASHION SHOW
AT THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES.

WHAT HAPPENED
MADE HISTORY.

WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD.

BOOKS

THE USES OF OBLIVIONKazuo Ishiguro's *"The Buried Giant."*

BY JAMES WOOD



Kazuo Ishiguro writes a prose of proving equilibrium—sea-level flat, with unseen fathoms below. He avoids ornament or surplus, and seems to welcome cliché, platitude, episodes as bland as milk, an atmosphere of oddly vacated calm whose mild persistence comes to seem teasingly or menacingly unreal. His previous novel, *"Never Let Me Go"* (2005), contained passages that appeared to have been entered in a competition called The Ten Most Boring Fictional Scenes. It began with dizzying dullness: "My name is Kathy H. I'm thirty-one years old, and I've been a carer now for eleven years." The stakes of the characters' interactions with one another seemed fantastically small; a friend and I had a

running joke in which we imagined Ishiguro murmuring with satisfaction to himself, after a morning of hard work, "Say what you want, but I *own* the scene where Kathy loses her pencil."

Of course, the stakes are eventually revealed to be fantastically large, and *"Never Let Me Go"* achieves great and moving speculative power, not because of what it has to say about the dilemma of cloning but because of what it has to say about ordinary life's unwelcome resemblance to the dilemma of cloning. We gradually learn that the fictional children we encounter, who attend an English boarding school called Hailsham, are clones, created by the state in order to be killed: their function is to provide

healthy organs for normal British citizens. Once they have completed their donations, they will die. The resignation of these children, who become aware of their fabricated function, is horrifying; most of the time, they seem sapped of rebellion. Ishiguro's pithless, neutered prose is mimetically effective. It enacts a meek acceptance that finally may be our own, too. The children of Hailsham endure short, determined, and thus "pointless" lives; but are our lives—though generally longer—less pointless or less determined? The lives of the cloned children, who fall in love and read novels and bicker at school just as ordinary kids do, seem like parodies of real freedom, of real existence, because we know what will happen to them not long after they leave school. But perhaps our own lives are mere parodies of real freedom, of real existence? Life is a death sentence, whether you die at twenty or at eighty. Ishiguro's novel can be seen as an inspired secular expansion of Pascal's tragic religious vision: "Imagine a number of men in chains, all condemned to death, some of whom are executed daily in sight of the rest; then those who are left see their own fate in that of their fellows, and regarding each other with sorrow and without hope, wait till their turn comes: this is a picture of man's condition."

Ishiguro's level banality has always been a rhetoric in search of a form. He doesn't need the pressure of realism (though his best work is powerful surely because it exerts its own pressure on the real), and indeed his novels are daring in the way that they seem almost to invent their own gauges of verisimilitude. But he does need the pressure of form, a narrative shape that forces his bland fictional representations to muster their significance. It is typically the significance of absence, of what has been concealed or repressed. His complacent or muted unreliable narrators, like the painter Ono, in *"An Artist of the Floating World,"* or the butler Stevens, in *"The Remains of the Day,"* tell stories that mildly and self-servingly repress secrets, shameful compromises, and the wounds of the past. (Both of these narrators have reason to conceal or minimize their involvement with Fascist politics just before the Second World War.) Under this kind of pressure, blandness emerges as a traumatized truce, a colorless pact that holds the

Ishiguro has set out to write a novel about people without memory.

personal and historical present together at the cost of a sinful amnesia.

Unfortunately, Ishiguro's new novel, "The Buried Giant" (Knopf), does not generate the kind of pressure that might wring shadows from the bemusing transparency of its narration. Thematically, it has obvious connections with the author's earlier analyses of historical repression, and with the blasted theology of "Never Let Me Go." It also has some consonance with the Kafkaesque dream-scape of "The Unconsoled" (a novel that has had able defenders since its publication, in 1995, but that has visited its own kind of amnesiac curse on me, since I can remember almost nothing distinct in its more than five hundred pages). But in his new novel Ishiguro runs the great risk of making literal and general what is implicit and personal in his best fiction. He has written not a novel about historical amnesia but an allegory of historical amnesia, set in a sixth- or seventh-century Britain, amok with dragons, ogres, and Arthurian knights. The problem is not fantasy but allegory, which exists to literalize and simplify. The giant is not buried deeply enough.

"The Buried Giant" is set after the end of a war between Saxons and Britons; they now live alongside each other, but warily. A widespread historical amnesia grips the populace, erasing both recent and distant memory. Axl and Beatrice, two elderly married Britons, call this forgetting "the mist." Even memories only a month or two old fade away. Axl and Beatrice once had a son, who disappeared, but neither can quite remember him, or why he left them. They embark on a journey to visit him, a quest that occupies the rest of the novel. (Despite all this mental erasure, they seem to know that "our son awaits us in his village.") In the course of the journey, they encounter two knights: Wistan, a young Saxon warrior, and Sir Gawain, an elderly and slightly buffoonish nephew of King Arthur, whose reputation, like Don Quixote's, comically precedes him. There are adventures and battles with ogres, pixies, dragons, and menacing soldiers. There are some sinister monks. Along the way, Beatrice and Axl discover that "the mist" is actually the breath of a tyrannical she-dragon named Querig, and that the only way to restore the country's stolen memory will be to kill Querig.

The novel ends with the vanquishing of Querig and the inauguration of a new historical dispensation, in which people will have to reckon with what they have forgotten. The restoration of memory is a bitter pleasure, it seems: Beatrice and Axl recover their intimate past, but historically the mist has enabled a period of peace, wherein Saxons and Britons had productively forgotten their former enmities and grievances. "Who knows what old hatreds will loosen across the land now?" Axl asks, fearfully. Wistan, who appears to have supped full of anti-British grievance, agrees: "The giant, once well buried, now stirs." He predicts savage warfare. But Beatrice and Axl, who are old, will likely not live to see this bloody future.

Tastes differ, and Ishiguro is welcome to his Arthurian chain metal. (You can't help admiring a writer who so courageously pleases himself, who writes so eccentrically against the norms.) But a generalized Arthurian setting, perilous for most writers, is a larger liability for a writer whose mimesis tends not toward the specific but toward discursive monologue and dreamlike suspensions. A master of detail such as Marguerite Yourcenar could perhaps pull off such a project. You can imagine Willa Cather attempting, and possibly succeeding at, a fictional reconstruction of Native American life centuries before the arrival of Europeans. William Golding wrote a great book about the lives of Neanderthals ("The Inheritors"), and an even finer book, set in the fourteenth century, about the building of a great church spire, not unlike Salisbury Cathedral's ("The Spire"). Chekhov wrote a moving story about an unpleasant coffin-maker, who has contrived, perhaps because of his buried grief, to repress the memory of his dead child, and who denies the child's very existence even as his wife is trying to remind him of it ("Rothschild's Fiddle"). But these novels and stories are rammed with texture and telling particulars; they are dynamic, sensuous, and concrete in a way that Ishiguro's story rarely is. "The Buried Giant" has far too much dialogue like this, more Monty Python than William Golding: "Your news overwhelms us, Sir Gawain. . . . But first tell us of this beast you speak of. What is its nature and does it threaten us even as we stand here?"

Just at the technical level, can one

SIT. PRAY. LOVE.

Timeless craftsmanship. Premium woods.
Tappan Chairs, exclusively at Chilton.

UTILITY • QUALITY • SIMPLICITY

CHILTON

chiltons.com 866-883-3366

HOPE DELIVERED.
IN HOMES. IN CLASSROOMS. IN TIMES OF CRISIS.

WFP Feed families in need by supporting the United Nations World Food Programme, the largest hunger relief agency.

wfpusa.org

www.wfpusa.org/hope
(202) 627-3737

RETIRE TO FEARRINGTON

A charming country village near Chapel Hill, NC with bluebirds, belted cows and fascinating people of all ages.

www.fearrington.com

AUSTEN RIGGS CENTER
Integrative Psychiatric Treatment

Stockbridge, MA | AUSTENRIGGS.ORG | 855-283-1770

SO ST
linen

all in linen
made in maine

www.southstreetlinen.com
774.234.7678

Dartmouth College
Parlez-vous Français?
10-Day Language Immersion Programs
Many Languages Offered

The Rassias Center
(603) 646-3583

<http://rassias.dartmouth.edu/alpsny>

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

Small space has big rewards.

To find out more, contact
Sara Nicholson at 877.843.6967.

write a successful novel about people who can't recall anything? Ishiguro is always breaking his own rules, and fudging limited but conveniently lucid recollections: "After a while Axl could no longer remember how talk of this journey had started, or what it had ever meant to them. But then this morning, sitting outside in the cold hour before dawn, this memory seemed partially at least to clear, and many things had come back to him: the red-haired woman; Marta; the stranger in dark rags. . . . And he had remembered, quite vividly, what had happened only a few Sundays ago, when they had taken Beatrice's candle from her." Well, which is it, a mist or an intermittent rain?

There are still deeper problems. Ishiguro returns to his old themes, but he robs his shadows of their darkness. A universal amnesia is a peculiarly vague condition—a mist, indeed. It is as if the amnesia had succumbed to its own loss of memory, its own deterioration of life-giving specificity. Furthermore, a story about a condition of forgetting imposed on the population by an external source is an etiology of suffering—a theology of suffering—about historical victims rather than a story about historical actors.

Allegory's function is to point us toward another meaning. And, because the-

ology is itself an allegory pretending not to be (theology is always striving to be an ultimacy, the point at which allegory stops), allegory about theology makes an excellent narrative fit: the pilgrim's progress resembles Jesus' progress, and Jesus is the ultimate pilgrim. So allegory is antinovelistic, because it points away from its own story, toward another story. Curiously, and despite its reputation, allegory is not suggestive. It is literal. If the suppression of historical memory is said to come from Querig's breath, and Querig is slain, ushering in a new historical phase, then the reader is prompted by the novel's narration to wonder what Querig represents—what Ishiguro means by literalizing historical amnesia in this way.

What Ishiguro means is the most acute problem in this book. His novel does offer a theology, and a potentially interesting one. A character named Ivor, encountered on the way, tells Beatrice that the mist may be a religious punishment. Perhaps God is angry about what humans have been up to? Or not angry, Beatrice surmises, but ashamed, as if God himself wanted to forget. But what, Axl asks, could humans have done to make God so ashamed? (Beatrice and Axl are Christians, but often find themselves alongside pagans.) One of the monks, Father Jonus, also suggests that God is angry with his people, and that the time has come to "uncover what's been hid-

den and face the past." It is claimed that the monks are actually keeping Querig alive, perhaps because their focus is not on the present but on the heavenly future. Father Jonus asks Beatrice if she is afraid of the return of her unhappy memories. She is not, because she and Axl love each other, and as we are constituted by our memories, for good and for ill, so is her marriage. In the same way, although the mist has maintained a frail truce between Britons and Saxons, it is clearly right, if not desirable, that historical memory should be restored, even if the cost is a return to old warfare.

The mist functions, then, a bit like one of the possible replies to the great question of theodicy: to reduce or eliminate suffering, free will would have had to be reduced or eliminated. Yet if we recoil from actual suffering, we also shudder at the prospect of a world without the freedom to do good or bad. There is an obvious connection here with the deprivations of the cloned world in "Never Let Me Go." To be deprived of our past is to be deprived of our future; without memory, we are automatons, not fully human. This may be Ishiguro's greatest theme, his flatness as a writer a way to represent our collusion with our own lack of freedom.

But where Ishiguro, in his previous novel, seemed fiercely, relentlessly committed to the elaboration and prosecution of that theme, he seems only half-hearted here. On the one hand, the novel suggests that humans may have caused the arrival of the mist (presumably, as a result of warfare so terrible that it encouraged an enforced amnesia, a kind of psychological Dayton Agreement); on the other hand, all the talk about angry or ashamed deities, along with the existence of Querig the she-dragon, suggests forces beyond human control and complicity. Ishiguro seems to want it both ways, as befits the religious credulity, the Arthurian magic, of his fictional world. "Never Let Me Go" is a miraculous novel, because it is an allegory that points straight at us—at ordinary, obedient, unfree human life. "The Buried Giant" points everywhere but at us, because its fictional setting is feeble, mythically remote, generic, and pressureless; and because its allegory manages somehow to be at once too literal and too vague—a magic rare but unwelcome. ♦



"Get closer together, closer together."



LET'S GO!

THE VERY BEAUTIFUL AND EXTREMELY USEFUL

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN APP

Featuring the most exciting of New York City's cultural happenings each week, as chosen by **NEW YORKER** editors.



SIMPLY THE BEST.

Search events by location, send them to friends, save them to your calendar, and buy tickets. And, in **EXCURSIONS**, our critics reveal their favorite outings and spots around town. Alex Ross and Emily Nussbaum lead audio tours, and Hilton Als and Richard Brody share secrets of their neighborhoods.



Supported by

PRICELESS[®]
NEW YORK



newyorker.com/go/goingsonapp

ON TELEVISION

WHAT ABOUT BOB?

The strange allure of Robert Durst and "The Jinx."

BY EMILY NUSSBAUM



In “The Jinx,” a six-episode HBO documentary series, the director Andrew Jarecki investigates Robert Durst, multiple-murder suspect, Manhattan real-estate scion, and shark-eyed master of the throwaway epigram, emerging with evidence that might actually put him in jail. This isn’t the first time Jarecki has suggested that Durst might be guilty: in 2010, he directed “All Good Things,” a feature, in which Ryan Gosling commits every bad act that Durst has been accused of, plus a few bonus ones, like the implied bludgeoning of a lovable husky. “All Good Things” wasn’t much good, maybe because it was inspired by the facts of Durst’s life, few of which seem plausible as fiction. This is a man,

after all, who, long after the mysterious disappearance of his first wife, Kathie, fled to Galveston, Texas, disguised himself as a mute woman, and then, while out on bail for the murder of a neighbor—whose corpse Durst dismembered with a bow saw—was arrested for shoplifting a chicken-salad sandwich at a Wegmans. (At the time, Durst had thirty-eight thousand dollars in his car.)

But if “All Good Things” got a thirty-two-per-cent rating on Rotten Tomatoes, it impressed the one critic who counted. Upon its debut, Durst—who was independently wealthy, out of prison, and in no clear need of further publicity—contacted Jarecki and agreed to be interviewed. I haven’t seen the finale of

“The Jinx,” so you’ll have to discern for yourself whether this decision was worth it for Durst. For Jarecki, it paid off in spades. “The Jinx” is wickedly entertaining: funny, morbid, and sad, at once exploitative and high-minded, a moral lasagna of questionable aesthetic choices (including reconstructions of ghastly events) and riveting interviews (of Durst, but also of other eccentrics, like his chain-smoking-hot second wife). The series acts as an extension of the legal process and as a type of investigative journalism. For viewers, however, it’s primarily a noir striptease, flashing revelations one by one—a method with proven appeal to viewers who like to feel both smart and titillated. Guilty as charged.

Clearly, I’m not alone, judging by the smash success of “Serial,” a podcast hosted by N.P.R.’s Sarah Koenig, which examined the case of Adnan Syed, who was convicted, in 2000, of the murder of his ex-girlfriend. The creators of “Serial” were, in turn, inspired by “The Staircase,” from 2004, an eight-part TV series about the trial of the novelist Michael Peterson, who was accused of killing his wife; it was filmed by the French director Jean-Xavier de Lestrade, who added a two-hour addendum in 2012. In the past several decades, true-crime documentaries have emerged as a kind of secondary appeals system, among them Errol Morris’s “The Thin Blue Line”; the three “Paradise Lost” movies; and the damning “Deliver Us from Evil,” in which Amy Berg got a pedophile priest to confess. The first two got their subjects out of prison; the second helped put the priest back in.

These projects have an afterlife online, where amateur detectives reinvestigate both the crimes and the documentaries themselves. Look up “The Staircase” and you’ll discover critiques of its filmmaker’s bias and, also, strangely convincing theories suggesting that an owl killed Michael Peterson’s wife. “Serial,” too, had its critics, but part of the appeal of the podcast was its transparency: Koenig placed her anxieties center stage, even when this risked making her appear credulous or uncool. Jarecki, who wears a goatee so sketchy that it might as well be another suspect, could easily seem like a questionable figure, given his slick ability to plug

One of the show’s lessons is that you don’t have to be brilliant to get away with a crime.

REFERENCE: PAT SULLIVAN/AP

his films as studies in ambiguity (his others include “Capturing the Friedmans” and “Catfish,” which he produced). He’s a showman, for sure, but he wins our trust with a few wise choices, among them folding in enough material about two victims—Kathie and Susan Berman, an old friend of Durst’s, who was shot execution style in Los Angeles—that they become more than chalk outlines. Yet, perhaps inevitably, the most watchable participants are the bad apples.

This is particularly true of Durst. He’s an indelible character, mesmerizing in his strangeness: he’s parchment-skinned, blinky-eyed, lizardlike, but he has a quality of fragility, too, along with a disarming, if often peevish, directness. When he feels misunderstood, a Larry David-like querulousness creeps into his voice. He answers questions about whether he hit Kathie (yes, he did—but, hey, it was the seventies) with a candor that no sane or diplomatic individual would use. Maddeningly, this makes him seem open, even when he’s almost certainly lying. Much of the pleasure of watching “The Jinx” is simply being immersed in the stubborn illogic of Durst’s world view, which is often less cagey than surreal. Asked why he lied to the police about his behavior on the night that Kathie disappeared, Durst explains that he thought that if he offered up a false alibi (one easily exposed) he’d be left alone. Then again, he wasn’t wrong: one of the lessons of “The Jinx” is that you don’t need to be a brilliant criminal to get away with a terrible crime. You just need a cop who never follows up, plus the

money for a legal team that’s savvy enough to play to the sensibilities of a Texas jury.

There is, of course, a queasy undercurrent to any show like this: we’re shivering at someone else’s grief, giggling at someone else’s crazy. Many of the best documentaries have this ugly edge, which may be why we cling to the idea that their creators (or, at least, those not named Werner Herzog) are as devoted to truth as to voyeurism. (Documentarians don’t get paid enough to do it for the money.) Yet it’s impossible not to laugh at the camp solemnity of this speech, from a Galveston detective: “Nobody deserves to be killed. Their head cut off. Their arms cut off. Their legs cut off. And packaged up. Like garbage.” When asked whether he purposely shaved his eyebrows while on the run, Durst’s response is impeccable as both humor and logic: “How do you accidentally shave your eyebrows?” At times, the moral of “The Jinx” seems to be that an air of dry wit, however inappropriately leveraged, is likely to win you allies.

It’s illuminating to compare the methods of “All Good Things” with those of “The Jinx”: both show footage of Durst as a happy child, swimming with his mother, and the adult Durst saying, “She died a violent death.” In “The Jinx,” the footage is wrenching because it’s real: the voice-over is audio from the Texas trial, played over grainy home movies. Then these images (scored with eerie singing saw) segue into an explicitly reconstructed flashback, which shows Durst’s mother’s suicide: a grotesque image, jolting the viewer with its tackiness. The transition was unsettling enough to make me won-

der whether those home movies, too, were a reconstruction. At the same time, there was something useful about the coarseness, which was Jarecki’s own “tell.” It was a reminder that everything in a documentary is contrived, even one with a fancy HBO imprimatur. The most sincere people still know that they’re talking to a camera.

Against this Barnum-like theatricality, spontaneous gestures stand out. There’s a poignant scene in which Durst is found not guilty of his neighbor’s murder: he turns to his lawyer and says, uncertain, “Did they say ‘not’?” The most unsettling example comes in the fourth episode, when Jarecki suggests that he and Durst take a break from discussing his testimony in Texas. Durst has confirmed that his lawyers hinted that he could answer specific questions about the dismemberment with “I don’t know”; that way, he’d sound less coldhearted. As soon as the filmmaker leaves the room, Durst, who is still wired for audio, lowers his head and mutters a sentence to himself. “I did not knowingly, purposely lie,” he says, and then pauses, considering, to add a word: “I did not knowingly, purposely, intentionally lie. I did make mistakes.”

Durst was rehearsing the interview, the way one might rehearse one’s testimony—but does that make him seem more guilty or just more realistic about documentaries? His lawyer tells him that his microphone is hot. Durst is fascinatingly unconcerned. He says again, “I never intentionally, purposefully lied. I made mistakes.” Then, with the shrug of an honest man, he adds what might be the tagline for the series: “I did not tell the whole truth. *Nobody* tells the whole truth.” ♦

THE NEW YORKER IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF ADVANCE MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS INC. COPYRIGHT ©2015 CONDÉ NAST. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

VOLUME XCI, NO. 5, March 23, 2015. THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028792X) is published weekly (except for five combined issues: February 23 & March 2, June 8 & 15, July 6 & 13, August 10 & 17, and December 21 & 28) by Condé Nast, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: Condé Nast, 1 World Trade Center, New York, NY 10007. Elizabeth Hughes, publisher, chief revenue officer; Beth Luskó, associate publisher advertising; James Guilfoyle, director of finance and business operations; Fabio Bertoni, general counsel. Condé Nast: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Charles H. Townsend, chief executive officer; Robert A. Sauerberg, Jr., president; David E. Geithner, chief financial officer; Jill Bright, chief administrative officer. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. 123242885-RT0001.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE NEW YORKER, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684. FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS, ADDRESS CHANGES, ADJUSTMENTS, OR BACK ISSUE INQUIRIES: Please write to The New Yorker, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684, call (800) 825-2510, or e-mail subscriptions@newyorker.com. Please give both new and old addresses as printed on most recent label. Subscribers: If the Post Office alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within one year. If during your subscription term or up to one year after the magazine becomes undeliverable, you are ever dissatisfied with your subscription, let us know. You will receive a full refund on all unmailed issues. First copy of new subscription will be mailed within four weeks after receipt of order. For advertising inquiries, please call Beth Luskó at (212) 286-4454. For submission guidelines, please refer to our Web site, www.newyorker.com. Address all editorial, business, and production correspondence to The New Yorker, 1 World Trade Center, New York, NY 10007. For cover reprints, please call (800) 897-8666, or e-mail covers@cartoonbank.com. For permissions and reprint requests, please call (212) 630-5656 or fax requests to (212) 630-5883. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of The New Yorker. The New Yorker’s name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. Visit us online at www.newyorker.com. To subscribe to other Condé Nast magazines, visit www.condenast.com. Occasionally, we make our subscriber list available to carefully screened companies that offer products and services that we believe would interest our readers. If you do not want to receive these offers and/or information, please advise us at P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684 or call (800) 825-2510.

THE NEW YORKER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RETURN OR LOSS OF, OR FOR DAMAGE OR ANY OTHER INJURY TO, UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS, UNSOLICITED ART WORK (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, DRAWINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND TRANSPARENCIES), OR ANY OTHER UNSOLICITED MATERIALS. THOSE SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ART WORK, OR OTHER MATERIALS FOR CONSIDERATION SHOULD NOT SEND ORIGINALS, UNLESS SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED TO DO SO BY THE NEW YORKER IN WRITING.



CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Paul Noth, must be received by Sunday, March 22nd. The finalists in the March 9th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the April 6th issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the United States, Canada (except Quebec), Australia, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit contest.newyorker.com.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"This town ain't big enough for anyone."
Ilan Moskowitz, Tenafly, N.J.



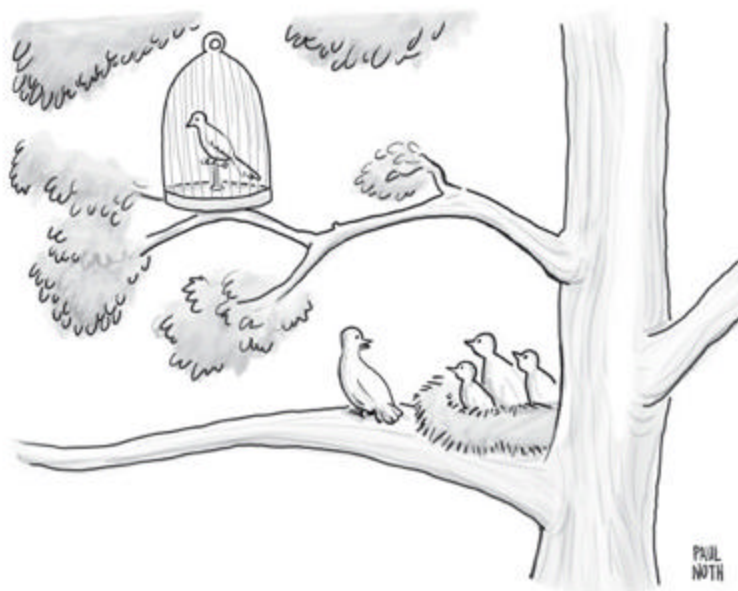
THE FINALISTS

"Be careful—the bald spot is slippery."
Lev Borisov, Princeton, N.J.

"Act of God. We're not liable."
Paul Hetland, Rochester, N.Y.

"We should buy a rug."
Alkis Hadjiosif, Cambridge, Mass.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



“

”

Hello Tomorrow



Be there to touch the unknown

The world invites you to countless experiences.
Make them your own. Fly Emirates to over
145 global destinations and you'll see that
nothing beats being there.

emirates.com/us

53 destinations in Asia • 24 destinations in Africa • 7 destinations in Australasia



LOUIS VUITTON